THE WAY OF POETRY

JOHN DRINKWATER

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THE WAY OF POETRY

The Spirit of Poetry.

Frontispiece

THE WAY OF POETRY

AN ANTHOLOGY

by

JOHN DRINKWATER

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT POETRY

NOTHING in the world gives people so much real pleasure as making things. And have you ever tried to think exactly what making a thing means? It doesn't mean making something out of nothing in a magical way, but it means taking a thing, or a number of things that are already in existence, and so arranging them, that in addition to the things that have been used, an entirely new thing comes into being.

For instance, a man may take thousands of bricks, each of which is a separate thing that has already been made, and out of them make an entirely new thing, a house. And in building a house the man is happy for two reasons—because he is making a useful thing, a place where he or some one else can live, and also because he is able to take a lot of bricks that have been lying in heaps, that do not seem to mean anything, and arrange them so that they become a house, which means a great deal. And there is nothing which gives us so much satisfaction as this ability to make disorder into order and give a useful meaning to things that until we have arranged them—just as the man arranges his bricks into a house—seemed to have no use or meaning at all.

Now it is a curious thing that by using our minds we

are able to get just this same kind of pleasure, which is so good for us, without having any real things to arrange. If you shut your eyes and then think of a horse, for example, it is certain that there is no real horse that you are looking at, and yet in some wonderful way you have been able to make a horse in your mind out of nothing. And the truth is that the idea of a horse which you have been able to call up in your mind, is just as real a thing, and just as important to you, as the horse that you may see in the street. And nothing will help you more in your life than the habit of seeing things in your mind very clearly; the habit not only of making things with your hands, but of making them in your mind as well. And just as, if you were building a house of bricks, you would not get the greatest possible pleasure unless you built a good, well-shaped, and complete house, so you will not get the greatest possible pleasure from the things that you make in your mind, unless they too are well-shaped and complete. You will find, for instance, that if you think about a horse with your eyes shut, that is to say, if you make a horse in your mind, you will get far more pleasure if you have learnt how to make it very exactly and clearly, than if you are only able to make it uncertainly, so that the horse in your mind is a confused kind of thing.

I have said that the pleasure that we get from making things, whether with our hands or in our minds, is good for us. This is so because, ever since the earth began, the greatest purpose of the life on it has been to grow from a confusion that cannot be understood into clear shapes that can be well understood, and when we make anything clearly and exactly we are helping this purpose. So that if the thing that we make is not clear, but only, so to speak, half made or a quarter made, we are failing to help the

life of which we are a part as fully as we might, and our pleasure is less in consequence. That is why, when you make a horse (or any other thing) in your mind, you will get far less satisfaction if it is only a vague horse, a little like a horse perhaps and a little like a donkey, shall we say, and a little like a bush or a wheelbarrow, than you will if it is a horse clearly and completely made.

And if we think about this a minute or two longer, we shall see that very often the things that we make in our minds are suggested to us by some one else. If I tell you that I saw the moon last night, you will at once make the moon in your mind. And if some one has himself seen a thing very clearly indeed, he will be able to tell us about it so well that we in our turn can make it very clearly in our own minds, and so get an especially large amount of that pleasure of which I have spoken. And it is just this that the poets can do for us, and that is why their poems can give us so much delight.

The poet sees or understands something very clearly indeed, so clearly that he is able to put it quite clearly into his poem, and then in a wonderful way we make it all over again for ourselves in our minds. For instance, William Morris saw the river Thames flowing on a cold winter night underneath the hills by his country home. And he saw it so clearly that he was able to tell us about it in words so well chosen, and arranged so beautifully for us to hear, that we cannot read them without finding all our best ability helping us in the delightful experience of seeing it all as clearly as Morris himself saw it :—

'The wind's on the wold
And the night is a-cold
And Thames runs chill
'Twixt mead and hill.'

Now forget about all this, and read the poems in this book. And after a time, when you have got used to them and know which ones you like best, read again what I have been saying, and I hope it will help you to understand something about what poetry may be to you now and through all your lives. For, while the first and by far the most important matter is to like a good thing, it is helpful, and, indeed, increases our liking, if we can find out why we like it.

THE POET'S WORDS AND IMAGES

I HAVE tried to tell you something of the reason why poetry could give us so much pleasure, and do so much to enrich our lives and our ways of thought. I want now to talk a little about the way in which the poet does his work, so that you may begin to understand what lies behind the making of the poetry that we find so full of enchantment. And, again, I do not want you to puzzle too much over what I say, but just to read it carefully, and then from time to time go back to it, from the poems themselves, in the hope that it may gradually help you to form your own clear judgment about the things that you read.

And first, although it seems a very simple thing to say, it is important to remember always, that the material which the poet uses for his work is words. Words to the poet are what paint is to the painter, or stone or marble to the sculptor, or notes of sound to the composer of music. So that if a poet uses his words well he needs no other help, while if he uses them badly nothing can be done to make his poem anything but worthless. Let us think what this means. Suppose a poet to be looking

along a country lane on a dry autumn day, just when most of the leaves have fallen from the trees. Seeing the flock of many-coloured leaves driven along by the wind, his emotions are stirred, and he then feels the need of shaping the emotion into the clear shapes of poetry. And to do this he has nothing but words for his purpose. So far as we are concerned, it is of no use for him to dance or wave his arms about in excitement, or rush along as though he too were a leaf driven by the wind. To do these things might in a certain way express his feelings, although it would be an expression of far less meaning than the exact statements of poetry,[1] but in any case they would mean nothing to us, since we should see nothing of them. So that what he has to record must be recorded in words, and in words alone. This, by the way, is the reason why it is so bad, when you are reading poetry aloud to people, to add to the words all sorts of gestures and facial expressions. The poet when he has finally chosen and arranged his words, if his poem is worth reading at all, has already said completely what he had to say, and if we add to his perfect expression this other feeble expression of our own, it is nothing but an impertinence, as though we were saying, 'This poet is not able to express himself very clearly, so we must help him out.'

Having now seen that words are what he has entirely to depend upon, we shall realise how necessary it is that the selection and arranging of words shall be his own

[1] If, for instance, you had been with Wordsworth when he saw a rainbow, and he had suddenly stopped walking and pointed to it, drawing a deep sigh of pleasure, just as any one in thousands of men might do, you would have by no means realised his personal delight as intimately as you now do when you read his simple but complete words—

> 'My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky.'

doing and not as he remembers it to have been done by some one else. If the poet really sees that scene of the country lane and blown leaves with his own eyes and in his own heart, he will be so intent upon his personal experience that his mind will be absorbed in inventing a personal way of expressing that experience; he will, in fact, create, and it is just this creating that makes us create for ourselves when we read his poem, and so gives us so much precious delight, as I have already explained. But if his experience is a vague and incomplete one, his mind, instead of working vigorously to create for itself, will lazily turn away to remember what some one else has said about the same kind of thing, and since one mind can never repeat another mind's work perfectly, he will only manage a half-expression, a second-hand and cheating expression, and directly we understand anything about poetry we are able to see through this kind of deception at once, and we know that it is useless to us, and gives us no real pleasure at all. Because what happens in this case is that the poet only gets a vague expression to match his vague experience, and he makes it vague in our minds too, which is exactly what poetry must never do.

We may now see how a great poet treats the vision he had of the autumn wind and the leaves. Shelley wrote of it thus,—

> 'O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
> Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
> Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
> Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red.'

You will notice at first how wonderfully he brings into our minds a vivid idea of that '*unseen* presence' by making it stir into movement the *dead* leaves, which in turn he

makes so real for us in their sharply contrasted colours—'yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red.' And then you will notice that he does more than this, which brings me to the other thing I want to tell you about the poet's way of working. He says that the leaves are scattered by the wind—

'Like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.'

This is what is called an image, and to use an image is one of the most powerful ways in which the poet can make himself clear to us. Shelley was not writing about ghosts and an enchanter, but about leaves scattered before the wind. But the cloud of leaves, driven along in commotion, brought into his mind an image of huddled ghosts crowding before the enchanter who had power to drive them forth at his will. He set this vision down very simply in words, but perfectly,—

'Ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.'

And then, although he had already conceived the idea of the leaves driven before the wind in words that could express it quite directly—'thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead are driven . . . yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red'—he sharpens the whole picture in our minds by taking our thoughts for a moment to that other idea of the ghosts and the enchanter, and then telling us that the thing of which he is actually writing is *like* that other thing of which he is not actually writing. And this using of an image to make the impression of what he sees even clearer than it would have been by direct statement, however exact and lucid, is an act of the imagination, which word you see is built upon the word image.

THE LIFE OF POETRY

If you look at the list of poets at the end of this book, you will see that while some of the poems that you are reading were written by men who, like Shakespeare, were born nearly four hundred years ago, others were written by men who are living now. A sage once said, 'There is no new thing under the sun,' and yet it is one of the many wonders that we learn from poetry that life, although it goes on from age to age, concerned with the same emotions and seeing the same natural beauty in the world, is always splendidly new. Shakespeare could see and hear—

> 'Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stone, and good in everything,'

and then one poet after another following him could be aware of the same thing, and yet, because he did strictly perceive it for himself, he could make it as new an experience for himself, and for us when we read his poem, as though no one in the world had ever perceived it before. Thus, nearly two hundred years after Shakespeare, Wordsworth could write—

> 'To me the meanest flower that blows, can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'

and then, more than a hundred years later again we have Mr Ralph Hodgson with—

'The everlasting pipe and flute
Of wind and sea and bird and brute,
And lips deaf men imagine mute
In wood and stone and clay.'

So that you see the poet does not have to discover and express new emotions and thoughts, but rather to express any emotion and his thought about it in such a way that we are certain that the experience in his mind is newly discovered by him and not merely handed on to him ready made by some one else. A great poem might very well be written to-morrow about so simple and old a thing as the blossoming of an apple-tree.

You will have noticed that often when you feel very intensely about anything, and whether the feeling be a happy or a sad one, you try to satisfy yourself by singing some tune or another; that your emotions, in other words, try to find some sort of rhythmic expression. This is a deep law of our natures which none of the philosophers has been able rightly to explain, but it is a law which we all recognise. And the poet, too, when he feels and realises anything with sufficient intensity, finds his expression naturally taking on a rhythmic form. With each new poem this rhythm is a fresh and personal thing, and yet we find that the language which he has to use has through many hundreds of years discovered certain forms or metres for itself as being best suited to its character. And you will notice as you read these books that one poet after another does in fact use the same metrical forms, not lazily and for want of the trouble to invent new ones, but because his instinct tells him that they are the right and natural ones for his language to fall into. But the strange and wonderful thing is that each poet, while he adds to

his authority by using these traditional forms, is able to impress them with his own personal sense of rhythm in such a way that they never grow stale, and are indeed new things with each new poet who uses them.

And so poetry is beautifully like life itself in seeming not to change yet always being new. Each year you see the trees covering themselves with green, the flowers in bloom, the young animals in the fields, the sun shining on the corn, the frost making its icicles and putting lovely patterns on the window. And in a way these seem to be the same trees and flowers and seasons that have been passing before men's eyes far back through the ages, and yet each year they are all marvellously new, as truly exciting discoveries for us when we see them as though there had never been such life before. And so with the poet and his poetry. He sees the same world, feels the same emotions, and meets the same questions as did his fathers for generations before him, and in finding expression for the working of his mind he will generally accept a form that has grown up in the practice of many poets whom he follows. But he sees and feels and questions out of his individual life, until the old experience is transfigured into something radiantly new and interesting, and he breathes into the old forms of poetry his own delighted sense of rhythm, until they too become fresh and vivid as the flowers that come to us with untiring wonder year by year.

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY.

I HAVE already talked to you a little of the nature of poetry and its meaning for us, of the poet's methods, and of the way in which tradition and new life combine to give poetry its power. It may interest you to know something of the actual history of poetry in this country, and this again will help you to make the pleasure that you get in reading a clearer and more orderly thing in your minds. To write anything like a complete account of the progress of English poetry through six hundred years or so would take a large volume instead of a few pages, but it may be possible to give you a simple outline that you can easily carry about in your memory without confusing a very important thing, which is the appreciation of poetry, with a very unimportant thing, which is the learning of dry facts about it.

The first great poet, then, who wrote in the English language as we know it to-day, was Geoffrey Chaucer, who is sometimes called the father of English poetry. In his verses, which show a mastery of words that has never been excelled, he told stories that are among the best that have ever been told. When a little later on you begin to read them for yourselves, you will find them full of beauty and amusement, for Chaucer's humour was as great as his passion. Then for nearly two hundred years, although poetry never died, and was sometimes served by such admirable poets as Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, there was no very rich period, and Chaucer remained a great and solitary figure in the art. It was not until towards the end of the sixteenth century, or something over three hundred years ago, that a large group

of poets began to work together towards making English poetry the thing of which we should be prouder than of anything that our country has given to the world. It was then that Christopher Marlowe and Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare walked about the streets of London, and wrote the poems and plays that have grown even more wonderful as the years have gone by, until to-day they seem as much a part of an Englishman's life as his rivers and counties. With these great ones were a host of others—it would be easy to name twenty—who shared the inspiration and added to the glory of what we call the Elizabethan age.

From that time the full tide of English poetry has moved on uncheeked down to our own day. It is difficult, and not very useful, to say exactly after Elizabeth's time where one period of poetry ended and another began, but the next great poet after Shakespeare to stand out in supremacy was John Milton, who was born about the time that Shakespeare died. The Elizabethans had been tremendously interested in the daily life about them, and even in their most tragic passions there is a certain intimacy of detail that makes us remember that they were men like ourselves, puzzled and anxious and brave and excitedly happy by turns. But Milton, who was blind for a long term of his life, making his greatest poems out of his meditation upon God's dealings with the world and men that he had created, seemed to move in a serene, almost untroubled mastery of thought, and that is why he is so consoling a poet to go to when we find life and the affairs of men most difficult and unintelligible. He gives us then something of his own noble imagination with which to rise above the narrow ways of our lesser vision. And just when this poet was creating the sublimest world in all

poetry, where gods and angels and devils embodied the highest imaginings that the human mind could conceive, others, notably Robert Herrick, were writing exquisite lyrics of the countryside and the simple fortunes of men.

Alexander Pope and John Dryden, the poets who followed Milton, were the masters of a period in poetry when a curious weakness of the age expressed itself, naturally enough, in the work of the poets. In life what we call good manners are the superficial token of fine character, and when there is no fine character behind them, they become false and silly, not being really good manners at all, but imitation good manners. Now it would be quite unjust to say that there was no fine character in the age of Pope and Dryden, or that there is no nobility in the work of these poets and their fellows, but it is a fact that people at that time did often make the mistake of supposing that good manners were a sufficient occupation in themselves, instead of realising that they could never exist at all unless they were merely the incidental result of fine character. And so they often gave themselves up to trivialities of life, and in their worship of good manners were apt to get no farther than foolish and affected manners, and this confusion in some measure reflected itself in the poetry of the time. But while we find in the work of such poets as Pope, a mechanical correctness of form and a conventionality of thought that is sometimes tiresome, we must remember that we have only to make a little allowance for this to discover that they, too, are carrying on the great tradition of poetry with personal and enduring genius.

Coming now to the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, to which we are led from Pope by men such as Thomas Gray and William Blake

through a time not very rich in poetry, we have a second great flowering of English song, as wonderful almost as that other one of Elizabethan days. Here we find William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Robert Burns, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats, with others whose names are hardly less famous. These men, it need not be said, wrote each in his own strongly distinctive way, but they all worked, under some common impulse and without realising that they were working to the same end, towards taking poetry back from the conventional habits of an artificial society to the simplicity of nature and the fundamental emotions of life. They belonged to an older country than the Elizabethans, and the fierce tragic passion of the earlier poets seems perhaps to give way to a deep and wistful but always splendidly courageous tenderness in these later men, but the inspiration of poetry runs as strongly as ever and there is no weariness, nothing but magnificently renewed vigour.

And then came the poets of yesterday, poets whom your fathers and grandfathers can remember as being alive—Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the rest, all of them increasing the riches of English poetry down to our own time. Nor, as you will have found in reading these books, did the making of poetry stop yesterday. It still goes on to-day, and there are poets writing now whose names you will remember when you are old men and women, as those other names have been remembered by our fathers before us. And when they too have gone, poetry will find new imaginations in which to work its never-dying will.

1919. JOHN DRINKWATER.

The Way of Poetry

FROM 'SONGS OF INNOCENCE'

PIPING down the valleys wild,
  Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
  And he laughing said to me:

'Pipe a song about a Lamb!'
  So I piped with merry cheer.
'Piper, pipe that song again;'
  So I piped: he wept to hear.

'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
  Sing thy songs of happy cheer:'
So I sang the same again,
  While he wept with joy to hear.

'Piper, sit thee down and write
  In a book, that all may read.'
So he vanish'd from my sight,
  And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
  And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
  Every child may joy to hear.

WILLIAM BLAKE

LITTLE TROTTY WAGTAIL

Little trotty wagtail, he went in the rain,
And twittering, tottering sideways he ne'er got straight again.
He stooped to get a worm, and looked up to get a fly,
And then he flew away ere his feathers they were dry.

Little trotty wagtail, he waddled in the mud,
And left his little footmarks, trample where he would.
He waddled in the water-pudge, and waggle went his tail,
And chirrupt up his wings to dry upon the garden rail.

Little trotty wagtail, you nimble all about,
And in the dimpling water-pudge you waddle in and out;
Your home is nigh at hand, and in the warm pig-stye,
So, little Master Wagtail, I'll bid you a good-bye.

JOHN CLARE.

IN THE POPPY FIELD

Mad Patsy said, he said to me,
That every morning he could see
An angel walking on the sky;
Across the sunny skies of morn
He threw great handfuls far and nigh
Of poppy seed among the corn;
And then, he said, the angels run
To see the poppies in the sun.

A poppy is a devil weed,
I said to him—he disagreed:
He said the devil had no hand
In spreading flowers tall and fair
Through corn and rye and meadow land,
By garth and barrow everywhere:
The devil has not any flower,
But only money in his power.

And then he stretched out in the sun
And rolled upon his back for fun:
He kicked his legs and roared for joy
Because the sun was shining down,
He said he was a little boy
And would not work for any clown:
He ran and laughed behind a bee,
And danced for very ecstasy.

JAMES STEPHENS.

ON A FAVOURITE CAT, DROWNED IN A TUB OF GOLDFISHES

'TWAS on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed
The azure flowers that blow,
Demurest of the tabby kind,
The pensive Selima, reclined,
Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared:
The fair round face, the snowy beard,

The velvet of her paws,
Her coat that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
She saw; and purr'd applause.

Still had she gazed, but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
The Genii of the stream:
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
Through richest purple to the view
Betray'd a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw:
A whisker first, and then a claw
With many an ardent wish
She stretch'd, in vain, to reach the prize—
What female heart can gold despise?
What Cat's averse to Fish?

Presumptuous maid! with looks intent
Again she stretch'd, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between—
Malignant Fate sat by and smiled—
The slippery verge her feet beguiled;
She tumbled headlong in!

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mew'd to every watery God
Some speedy aid to send:—
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd,
Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard—
A favourite has no friend!

From hence, ye Beauties, undeceived,
Know one false step is ne'er retrieved,
And be with caution bold:
Not all that tempts your wandering eyes
And heedless hearts, is lawful prize,
Nor all that glisters, gold!

THOMAS GRAY.

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A MAD DOG

GOOD people all, of every sort
Give ear unto my song;
And if you find it wondrous short,
It cannot hold you long.

In Islington there was a man,
Of whom the world might say,
That still a godly race he ran
Whene'er he went to pray.

A kind and gentle heart he had,
To comfort friends and foes;
The naked every day he clad,
When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
As many dogs there be,
Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
And curs of low degree.

This dog and man at first were friends;
  But when a pique began,
The dog, to gain his private ends,
  Went mad, and bit the man.

Around from all the neighbouring streets
  The wondering neighbours ran,
And swore the dog had lost his wits,
  To bite so good a man.

The wound it seem'd both sore and sad
  To every Christian eye:
And while they swore the dog was mad,
  They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light,
  That show'd the rogues they lied,
The man recover'd of the bite,
  The dog it was that died.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

TO DAFFODILS

FAIR Daffodils, we weep to see
  You haste away so soon:
As yet the early-rising Sun
  Has not attain'd his noon.
    Stay, stay,
  Until the hasting day
    Has run
  But to the even-song;
And, having pray'd together, we
  Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you, or anything.
We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the Summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

ROBERT HERRICK.

RAPTURES

SING for the sun your lyric, lark
Of twice ten thousand notes;
Sing for the moon, you nightingales,
Whose light shall kiss your throats;
Sing, sparrows, for the soft warm rain,
To wet your feathers through;
And, when a rainbow's in the sky,
Sing you, cuckoo—'Cuckoo!'

Sing for your five blue eggs, fond thrush,
By many a leaf concealed;
You starlings, wrens, and blackbirds sing
In every wood and field:
While I, who fail to give my love
Long raptures twice as fine,
Will for her beauty breathe this one—
A sigh, that's more divine.

W. H. DAVIES.

SONG

When icicles hang by the wall
  And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
  And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipt, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl
    Tuwhoo!
Tuwhit! tuwhoo! A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
  And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
  And Marian's nose looks red and raw;
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl—
Then nightly sings the staring owl
    Tuwhoo!
Tuwhit! tuwhoo! A merry note!
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

TO THE CUCKOO

O BLITHE new-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice:
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listen'd to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
  Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
  That golden time again.

O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
  Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, fairy place,
  That is fit home for Thee.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

STUPIDITY STREET

I SAW with open eyes
Singing birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For the people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat;
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street.

RALPH HODGSON.

BLACKBIRD

He comes on chosen evenings,
My blackbird bountiful, and sings
Over the gardens of the town
Just at the hour the sun goes down.
His flight across the chimneys thick,
By some divine arithmetic,
Comes to his customary stack,
And couches there his plumage black,
And there he lifts his yellow bill
Kindled against the sunset, till
These suburbs are like Dymock woods
Where music has her solitudes,
And while he mocks the winter's wrong
Rapt on his pinnacle of song,
Figured above our garden plots
Those are celestial chimney-pots.

John Drinkwater.

BEAUTIFUL MEALS

How nice it is to eat!
All creatures love it so,
That they who first did spread,
Ere breaking bread,
A cloth like level snow,
Were right, I know.

And they were wise and sweet
Who, glad that meats taste good,
Used speech in an arch style,
And oft would smile
To raise the cheerful mood,
While at their food.

And those who first, so neat,
Placed fork and knife quite straight,
The glass on the right hand;
And all, as planned,
Each day set round the plate,—
Be their praise great!

For then, their hearts being light,
They plucked hedge-posies bright—
Flowers who, their scent being sweet,
Give nose and eye a treat:
'Twas they, my heart can tell,
Not eating fast but well,
Who wove the spell
Which finds me every day,
And makes each meal-time gay;
I know 'twas they.

T. STURGE MOORE.

AUTUMN: A DIRGE

THE warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the year
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, Months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the year;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling;
Come, Months, come away;
Put on white, black, and gray;
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

THE SANDS OF DEE

'O MARY, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee;'
The western wind was wild and dank with foam,
And all alone went she.

The western tide crept up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand,
As far as eye could see.
The rolling mist came down and hid the land:
And never home came she.

'Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
A tress of golden hair,
A drownèd maiden's hair
Above the nets at sea?
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes on Dee.'

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
The cruel crawling foam,
The cruel hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea:
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

AND SHALL TRELAWNY DIE?

A GOOD sword and a trusty hand!
A merry heart and true!
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do.

And have they fixed the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!

Out spake their captain brave and bold,
A merry wight was he:
'If London Tower were Michael's hold,
We'll set Trelawny free!

'We'll cross the Tamar, land to land,
The Severn is no stay,—
With "one and all," and hand in hand,
And who shall bid us nay?

'And when we come to London Wall,
A pleasant sight to view,
Come forth! Come forth, ye cowards all,
Here's men as good as you.

'Trelawny he's in keep and hold,
Trelawny he may die;—
But here's twenty thousand Cornish bold
Will know the reason why!'

ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER.

THE KEEL ROW

As I came thro' Sandgate,
Thro' Sandgate, thro' Sandgate,
As I came thro' Sandgate
  I heard a lassie sing,
O weel may the keel row,
The keel row, the keel row,
O weel may the keel row,
  That my laddie's in.

O wha's like my Johnny,
Sae leith, sae blythe, sae bonny?
He's foremost among the mony
  Keel lads o' coaly Tyne:
He'll set and row so tightly,
Or in the dance—so sprightly—
He'll cut and shuffle sightly;
  'Tis true,—were he not mine.

He wears a blue bonnet,
Blue bonnet, blue bonnet;
He wears a blue bonnet,—
  And a dimple in his chin:
And weel may the keel row,
The keel row, the keel row;
And weel may the keel row,
  That my laddie's in.

ANONYMOUS.

THE BEGGAR MAID

Her arms across her breast she laid;
She was more fair than words can say:
Bare-footed came the beggar maid
Before the king Cophetua.
In robe and crown the king stept down,
To meet and greet her on her way:
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen:
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been:
Cophetua sware a royal oath:
'This beggar maid shall be my queen!'

Alfred Tennyson.

JACK AND JOAN

Jack and Joan, they think no ill,
But loving live, and merry still;
Do their weekdays' work, and pray
Devoutly on the holy day:
Skip and trip it on the green,
And help to choose the Summer Queen:
Lash out, at a country feast,
Their silver penny with the best.

Well can they judge of nappy ale,
And tell at large a winter tale;
Climb up to the apple loft,
And turn the crabs till they be soft.
Tib is all the father's joy,
And little Tom the mother's boy.
All their pleasure is content;
And care, to pay their yearly rent.

Joan can call by name her cows,
And deck her windows with green boughs;
She can wreaths and tuttyes make,
And trim with plums a bridal cake.
Jack knows what brings gain or loss;
And his long flail can stoutly toss:
Makes the hedge which others break;
And ever thinks what he doth speak.

Now, you courtly dames and knights,
That study only strange delights;
Though you scorn the homespun gray,
And revel in your rich array:
Though your tongues dissemble deep,
And can your heads from danger keep;
Yet, for all your pomp and train,
Securer lives the silly swain.

THOMAS CAMPION.

WIDDICOMBE FAIR

I

'Tom Pearse, Tom Pearse, lend me your gray mare,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
For I want for to go to Widdicombe Fair,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.'
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

II

'And when shall I see again my gray mare?'—
All along, down along, out along, lee.
'By Friday soon, or Saturday noon,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.'
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

III

Then Friday came and Saturday noon,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
But Tom Pearse's old mare hath not trotted home,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

IV

So Tom Pearse he got up to the top o' the hill,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
And he sees his old mare down a-making her will,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

V

So Tom Pearse's old mare her took sick and her died,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
And Tom he sat down on a stone, and he cried
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

VI

But this isn't the end o' this shocking affair,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
Nor, though they be dead, of the horrid career
Of Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

VII

When the wind whistles cold on the moor of a night,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
Tom Pearse's old mare doth appear, gashly white,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

VIII

And all the long night be heard skirling and groans,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
From Tom Pearse's old mare in her rattling bones,
And from Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.
Chorus—Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

Old Ballad.

A WISH

Mine be a cot beside the hill;
A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear;
A willowy brook, that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing
In russet-gown and apron blue.

The village-church, among the trees,
Where first our marriage-vows were given,
With merry peals shall swell the breeze,
And point with taper spire to heaven.

Samuel Rogers.

THE QUIET LIFE

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire;
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter, fire.

Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

Alexander Pope.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

Robert Browning.

ON MAY MORNING

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip, and the pale primrose.
Hail, bounteous May! that dost inspire
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire;
Woods and groves are of thy dressing;
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

JOHN MILTON.

FROM 'STRANGE MEETINGS'

THE stars must make an awful noise
In whirling round the sky;
Yet somehow I can't even hear
Their loudest song or sigh.

So it is wonderful to think
One blackbird can outsing
The voice of all the swarming stars
On any day in Spring.

HAROLD MONRO

THE BROOK

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling.

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

'A cottage, lone and still.'

DREAM-PEDLARY

If there were dreams to sell,
  What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell;
  Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
  What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
  With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
  Until I die.
Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down,
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
  This would I buy.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES.

INSCRIPTION FOR AN OLD BED

THE wind's on the wold
And the night is a-cold,
And Thames runs chill
'Twixt mead and hill.
But kind and dear
Is the old house here
And my heart is warm
'Midst winter's harm.
Rest then and rest,
And think of the best
'Twixt summer and spring,
When all birds sing
In the town of the tree,
And ye lie in me
And scarce dare move
Lest the earth and its love
Should fade away
Ere the full of the day.
I am old and have seen
Many things that have been;
Both grief and peace
And wane and increase.
No tale I tell
Of ill or well
But this I say;
Night treadeth on day,
And for worst or best
Right good is rest.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

A LETTER

My noble, lovely, little Peggy,
Let this my First Epistle beg ye,
At dawn of morn, and close of even,
To lift your heart and hands to Heaven.
In double duty, say your prayer:
Our Father first, then *Notre Père.*

And, dearest child, along the day,
In every thing you do and say,
Obey and please my lord and lady,
So God shall love and angels aid ye.

If to these precepts you attend,
No second letter need I send,
And so I rest your constant friend.

MATTHEW PRIOR.

FROM 'IN MEMORIAM'

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

NURSERY RHYMES

THE BELLS OF LONDON

Gay go up and gay go down,
To ring the bells of London town.
Halfpence and farthings,
Say the bells of St Martin's.
Oranges and lemons,
Say the bells of St Clement's.
Pancakes and fritters,
Say the bells of St Peter's.
Two sticks and an apple,
Say the bells of Whitechapel.

Kettles and pans,
Say the bells of St Ann's.
You owe me ten shillings,
Say the bells of St Helen's.
When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey.
When I grow rich,
Say the bells of Shoreditch.
Pray when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney.
I am sure I don't know,
Says the great bell of Bow.

JOHNNY SHALL HAVE A NEW BONNET

JOHNNY shall have a new bonnet,
And Johnny shall go to the fair,
And Johnny shall have a blue ribbon
To tie up his bonny brown hair.

And why may not I love Johnny?
And why may not Johnny love me?
And why may not I love Johnny
As well as another body?

And here's a leg for a stocking,
And here's a leg for a shoe;
And he has a kiss for his daddy,
And two for his mammy, I trow.

And why may not I love Johnny?
And why may not Johnny love me?
And why may not I love Johnny
As well as another body?

THE FROG HE WOULD A-WOOING RIDE

IT was the frog in the well,
Humble dum, humble dum,
And the merry mouse in the mill,
Tweedle, tweedle, twino.

The frog would a-wooing ride,
Humble dum, humble dum,
Sword and buckler by his side,
Tweedle, tweedle, twino.

When upon his high horse set,
  Humble dum, humble dum,
His boots they shone as black as jet,
  Tweedle, tweedle, twino.

When he came to the merry mill pin,
Lady Mouse beene you within?
Then came out the dusty mouse,
I am lady of this house;

Hast thou any mind of me?
I have e'en great mind of thee.
Who shall this marriage make?
Our lord, which is the rat.

What shall we have to our supper?
Three beans in a pound of butter.
But, when supper they were at,
The frog, the mouse, and e'en the rat,

Then came in Tib, our cat,
And caught the mouse e'en by the back,
Then did they separate:
The frog leapt on the floor so flat;

Then came in Dick, our drake,
And drew the frog e'en to the lake,
The rat he ran up the wall,
And so the company parted all.

SIMPLE SIMON

Simple Simon met a pieman
  Going to the fair;
Says Simple Simon to the pieman,
  'Let me taste your ware.'

Says the pieman to Simple Simon,
  'Show me first your penny';
Says Simple Simon to the pieman,
  'Indeed I have not any.'

Simple Simon went a-fishing
  For to catch a whale;
All the water he had got
  Was in his mother's pail.

Simple Simon went to look
  If plums grew on a thistle;
He pricked his fingers very much
  Which made poor Simon whistle.

I HAD A LITTLE PONY

I had a little pony,
  His name was Dapple-gray,
I lent him to a lady,
  To ride a mile away;
She whipped him, she slashed him,
  She rode him through the mire;
I would not lend my pony now
  For all the lady's hire.

I HAD A LITTLE HOBBY-HORSE

I HAD a little hobby-horse,
  And it was dapple gray;
Its head was made of peastraw,
  Its tail was made of hay.

I sold it to an old woman
  For a copper groat;
And I'll not sing my song again
  Without a new coat.

THERE WAS A CROOKED MAN

THERE was a crooked man, and he went a crooked mile,
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile:
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,
And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

THERE WAS A JOLLY MILLER

THERE was a jolly miller
  Lived on the river Dee;
He worked and sang from morn till night,
  No lark so blithe as he.
And this the burden of his song
  For ever used to be—
I care for nobody—no! not I,
  Since nobody cares for me.

THERE WAS A MAN OF NEWINGTON

THERE was a man of Newington,
And he was wondrous wise,
He jumped into a quickset hedge,
And scratched out both his eyes:
But when he saw his eyes were out,
With all his might and main
He jumped into another hedge,
And scratched them in again.

I HAD A LITTLE NUT-TREE

I HAD a little nut-tree, nothing would it bear
But a silver nutmeg and a golden pear;
The King of Spain's daughter came to visit me,
And all was because of my little nut-tree.
I skipped over water, I danced over sea,
And all the birds in the air couldn't catch me.

OLD KING COLE

Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe,
And he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.

Every fiddler he had a fiddle,
And a very fine fiddle had he;
Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee, went the fiddlers.
Oh, there's none so rare
As can compare
With King Cole and his fiddlers three.

THE NORTH WIND DOTH BLOW

THE north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor Robin do then, poor thing?

He'll sit in a barn,
And keep himself warm,
And hide his head under his wing, poor thing.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MY PRETTY MAID

WHERE are you going, my pretty maid,
With your rosy cheeks and golden hair?
'I'm going a-milking, sir,' she said;
The strawberry-leaves make maidens fair.

Shall I go with you, my pretty maid,
With your rosy cheeks and golden hair?
'Yes, if you please, kind sir,' she said;
The strawberry-leaves make maidens fair.

What is your father, my pretty maid,
With your rosy cheeks and golden hair?
'My father's a farmer, sir,' she said;
The strawberry-leaves make maidens fair.

What is your fortune, my pretty maid,
With your rosy cheeks and golden hair?
'My face is my fortune, sir,' she said;
The strawberry-leaves make maidens fair.

Then I won't have you, my pretty maid,
With your rosy cheeks and golden hair.
'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said;
The strawberry-leaves make maidens fair.

A FROG HE WOULD A-WOOING GO

A FROG he would a-wooing go,
Heigho, says Rowley,
Whether his mother would let him or no.
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

So off he set with his opera hat,
Heigho, says Rowley,
And on the road he met with a rat.
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

'Pray, Mr Rat, will you go with me,
Heigho, says Rowley,
Kind Mrs Mousey for to see?'
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

When they came to the door of Mousey's hall,
Heigho, says Rowley,
They gave a loud knock and they gave a loud call.
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

'Pray, Mrs Mouse, are you within?'
Heigho, says Rowley,
'Oh, yes, kind sirs, I'm sitting to spin.'
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

'Pray, Mrs Mouse, will you give us some beer?
Heigho, says Rowley,
For Froggy and I are fond of good cheer.'
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

'Pray, Mr Frog, will you give us a song?
Heigho, says Rowley,
But let it be something that's not very long.'
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

'Indeed, Mrs Mouse,' replied the Frog,
Heigho, says Rowley,
'A cold has made me as hoarse as a dog.'
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

'Since you have caught cold, Mr Frog,' Mousey said,
Heigho, says Rowley,
'I'll sing you a song that I have just made.'
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

But while they were all a merry-making,
Heigho, says Rowley,
A cat and her kittens came tumbling in.
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

The cat she seized the rat by the crown;
Heigho, says Rowley,
The kittens they pulled the little mouse down.
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

This put Mr Frog in a terrible fright,
Heigho, says Rowley,
He took up his hat, and he wished them good-night,
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

But as Froggy was crossing over a brook,
Heigho, says Rowley,
A lily-white duck came and gobbled him up.
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

So there was an end of one, two, and three,
Heigho, says Rowley,
The Rat, the Mouse, and the little Frog-gee!
With a rowley powley, gammon, and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

HOW MANY MILES IS IT TO BABYLON?

How many miles is it to Babylon?—
Threescore miles and ten.
Can I get there by candlelight?—
Yes, and back again!
If your heels are nimble and light,
You may get there by candlelight.

TO BED, TO BED

To bed, to bed,
Says Sleepy-head;
Tarry awhile, says Slow;
Put on the pan,
Says Greedy Nan,
Let's sup before we go.

MARY'S LAMB

MARY had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow;
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go.

He followed her to school one day;
That was against the rule;
It made the children laugh and play
To see a lamb at school.

And so the teacher turned him out,
But still he lingered near,
And waited patiently about
Till Mary did appear.

Then he ran to her, and laid
His head upon her arm,
As if he said, 'I'm not afraid,—
You'll keep me from all harm.'

A CHANTED CALENDAR

FIRST came the primrose
On the bank high,
Like a maiden looking forth
From the window of a tower
When the battle rolls below,
So look'd she,
And saw the storms go by.

Then came the wind-flower
In the valley left behind,
As a wounded maiden, pale
With purple streaks of woe,
When the battle has roll'd by
Wanders to and fro,
So totter'd she,
Dishevell'd in the wind.

Then came the daisies,
On the first of May,
Like a banner'd show's advance
While the crowd runs by the way,
With ten thousand flowers about them they
came trooping through the fields.
As a happy people come,
So came they,
As a happy people come
When the war has roll'd away,
With dance and tabor, pipe, and drum,
And all make holiday.

Then came the cowslip,
Like a dancer in the fair,
She spread her little mat of green,
And on it danced she.
With a fillet bound about her brow,
A fillet round her happy brow,
A golden fillet round her brow,
And rubies in her hair.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

RUTH

She stood breast-high amid the corn,
Clasp'd by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek an autumn flush,
Deeply ripen'd;—such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest, none could tell,
But long lashes veil'd a light,
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
Made her tressy forehead dim;
Thus she stood amid the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks :—

Sure, I said, Heav'n did not mean,
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean,
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

Thomas Hood.

A BOY'S SONG

WHERE the pools are bright and deep,
Where the gray trout lies asleep,
Up the river and over the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the blackbird sings the latest,
Where the hawthorn blooms the sweetest,
Where the nestlings chirp and flee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the mowers mow the cleanest,
Where the hay lies thick and greenest,
There to track the homeward bee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the hazel bank is steepest,
Where the shadow falls the deepest,
Where the clustering nuts fall free,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Why the boys should drive away
Little sweet maidens from the play,
Or love to banter and fight so well,
That's the thing I never could tell.

But this I know, I love to play
Through the meadow, among the hay,
Up the water and over the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

JAMES HOGG.

LORD ULLIN'S DAUGHTER

A CHIEFTAIN to the Highlands bound
  Cries 'Boatman, do not tarry!
And I'll give thee a silver pound
  To row us o'er the ferry!'

'Now who be ye, would cross Lochgyle
  This dark and stormy water?'
'O I'm the chief of Ulva's isle,
  And this, Lord Ullin's daughter.

'And fast before her father's men
  Three days we've fled together,
For should he find us in the glen,
  My blood would stain the heather.

'His horsemen hard behind us ride—
  Should they our steps discover,
Then who will cheer my bonny bride
  When they have slain her lover?'

Out spoke the hardy Highland wight,
  'I'll go, my chief, I'm ready:
It is not for your silver bright,
  But for your winsome lady:—

'And by my word! the bonny bird
  In danger shall not tarry;
So though the waves are raging white
  I'll row you o'er the ferry.'

By this the storm grew loud apace,
The water-wraith was shrieking;
And in the scowl of heaven each face
Grew dark as they were speaking.

But still as wilder blew the wind
And as the night grew drearer,
Adown the glen rode armèd men,
Their trampling sounded nearer.

'O haste thee, haste!' the lady cries,
'Though tempests round us gather;
I'll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father.'

The boat has left a stormy land,
A stormy sea before her,—
When, oh! too strong for human hand
The tempest gather'd o'er her.

And still they row'd amidst the roar
Of waters fast prevailing:
Lord Ullin reach'd that fatal shore,—
His wrath was changed to wailing.

For, sore dismay'd, through storm and shade
His child he did discover:—
One lovely hand she stretch'd for aid,
And one was round her lover.

'Come back! come back!' he cried in grief
'Across this stormy water:
And I'll forgive your Highland chief,
My daughter!—O my daughter!'

'Twas vain: the loud waves lash'd the shore,
Return or aid preventing:
The waters wild went o'er his child,
And he was left lamenting.

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SPRING

And now all nature seemed in love;
The lusty sap began to move;
New juice did stir the embracing vines,
And birds had drawn their valentines;
The jealous trout that now did lie,
Rose at a well-dissembled fly:
There stood my friend with patient skill,
Attending of his trembling quill.
Already were the eaves possessed
With the swift pilgrim's daubed nest:
The groves already did rejoice
In Philomel's triumphing voice.
The showers were short, the weather mild,
The morning fresh, the evening smiled.
Joan takes her neat-rubbed pail and now
She trips to milk the sand-red cow;
Where, for some sturdy football swain,
Joan strokes a sillabub or twain.
The fields and gardens were beset
With tulip, crocus, violet;
And now, though late, the modest rose
Did more than half a blush disclose.
Thus all looked gay, all full of cheer,
To welcome the new-liveried year.

Sir Henry Wotton.

SPRING MORNING

THOMALIN

WHERE is every piping lad
That the fields are not yclad
With their milk-white sheep?
Tell me: is it holiday,
Or if in the month of May
Use they long to sleep?

PIERS

Thomalin, 'tis not too late,
For the turtle and her mate
Sitten yet in nest:
And the thrustle hath not been
Gath'ring worms yet on the green,
But attends her rest.
Not a bird hath taught her young,
Nor her morning's lesson sung
In the shady grove:
But the nightingale in dark
Singing woke the mounting lark:
She records her love.
Not the sun hath with his beams
Gilded yet our crystal streams;
Rising from the sea,
Mists do crown the mountain's tops,
And each pretty myrtle drops:
'Tis but newly day.

WILLIAM BROWNE.

I WILL MAKE YOU BROOCHES

I WILL make you brooches and toys for your delight
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night.
I will make a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom.
And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!
That only I remember, that only you admire,
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

MENAPHON'S ROUNDELAY

WHEN tender ewes, brought home with evening sun,
Wend to their folds
And to their holds
The shepherds trudge when light of day is done,
Upon a tree
The eagle, Jove's fair bird, did perch;
There resteth he.
A little fly his harbour then did search,
And did presume, though others laughed thereat,
To perch whereas the princely eagle sat.

The eagle frowned, and shook his royal wings,
And charged the fly
From thence to hie:
Afraid, in haste, the little creature flings,
Yet seeks again,
Fearful, to perk him by the eagle's side.
With moody vein,
The speedy post of Ganymede replied,
'Vassal, avaunt, or with my wings you die;
Is't fit an eagle seat him with a fly?'

The fly craved pity, still the eagle frowned;
The silly fly,
Ready to die,
Disgraced, displaced, fell grovelling to the ground:
The eagle saw,
And with a royal mind said to the fly,
'Be not in awe,
I scorn by me the meanest creature die;
Then seat thee here.' The joyful fly upflings,
And sat safe shadowed with the eagle's wings.

ROBERT GREENE.

EVENING SONG

SHEPHERDS all, and maidens fair,
Fold your flocks up, for the air
'Gins to thicken, and the sun
Already his great course hath run.
See the dew-drops how they kiss
Every little flower that is,

'The sun
Already his great course hath run.'

Hanging on their velvet heads,
Like a rope of crystal beads:
See the heavy clouds low falling,
And bright Hesperus down calling
The dead Night from under ground;
At whose rising, mists unsound,
Damps and vapours fly apace,
Hovering o'er the wanton face
Of these pastures, where they come,
Striking dead both bud and bloom;
Therefore, from such danger lock
Every one his lovèd flock;
And let your dogs lie loose without,
Lest the wolf come as a scout
From the mountain, and ere day,
Bear a lamb or kid away;
Or the crafty thievish fox
Break upon your simple flocks.
To secure yourselves from these,
Be not too secure in ease;
Let one eye his watches keep,
Whilst the other eye doth sleep;
So shall you good shepherds prove,
And for ever hold the love
Of our great god. Sweetest slumbers,
And soft silence fall in numbers
On your eyelids! So, farewell!
Thus I end my evening's knell.

JOHN FLETCHER.

NIGHT

THE sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
The moon, like a flower,
In heaven's high bower,
With silent delight
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight.
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
The feet of angels bright;
Unseen they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are cover'd warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm.
If they see any weeping,
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head,
And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep.

But if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most heedful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
  Shall flow with tears of gold,
And pitying the tender cries,
  And walking round the fold,
Saying, 'Wrath, by His meekness,
And, by His health, sickness
Is driven away
From our immortal day.

'And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
  I can lie down and sleep;
Or think on Him who bore thy name,
  Graze after thee and weep.
For, wash'd in life's river,
My bright mane for ever
Shall shine like the gold
As I guard o'er the fold.'

WILLIAM BLAKE.

LEISURE

WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

W. H. DAVIES.

A WISH

This only grant me, that my means may lie
Too low for envy, for contempt too high.
Some honour I would have,
Not from great deeds, but good alone.
The unknown are better than ill known;
Rumour can ope the grave.
Acquaintance I would have, but when 't depends
Not on the number, but the choice of friends.

Books should, not business, entertain the light,
And sleep, as undisturb'd as death, the night.
My house a cottage, more
Than palace, and should fitting be,
For all my use, not luxury.
My garden painted o'er
With nature's hands, not art's; and pleasures yield,
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.

Thus would I double my life's fading space,
For he that runs it well, twice runs his race.
And in this true delight
The unbought sports, this happy state,
I would not fear nor wish my fate,
But boldly say each night,
To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them; I have liv'd to-day.

Abraham Cowley.

ROSE AYLMER

Ah, what avails the sceptred race!
Ah, what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and sighs
I consecrate to thee.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

PAST AND PRESENT

I REMEMBER, I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day;
But now I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember
The roses red and white,
The violets and the lily-cups—
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday—
The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember
Where I was used to swing
And thought the air must rush as fresh
To swallows on the wing;
My spirit flew in feathers then
That is so heavy now,
And summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow.

I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy.

THOMAS HOOD.

A SISTER

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The sparrow's dwelling, which hard by
My father's house in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, though wishing, to be near it;
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy;
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears,
A heart the fountain of sweet tears,
And love, and thought, and joy.

William Wordsworth.

OLD CROW

The bird in the corn
Is a marvellous crow.
He was laid and was born
In the season of snow;
And he chants his old catches
Like a ghost under hatches.

'A little Prattler among men.'

He comes from the shades
  Of his wood very early,
And works in the blades
  Of the wheat and the barley,
And he's happy, although
He's a grumbleton crow.

The larks have devices
  For sunny delight,
And the sheep in their fleeces
  Are woolly and white;
But these things are scorn
Of the bird in the corn.

And morning goes by,
  And still he is there,
Till a rose in the sky
  Calls him back to his lair
In the boughs where the gloom
Is a part of his plume.

But the boy in the lane
  With his gun, by-and-by,
To the heart of the grain
  Will narrowly spy,
And the twilight will come,
And no crow will fly home.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

DAFFODIL

BATTE

Gorbo, as thou camest this way,
By yonder little hill,
Or as thou through the fields did stray,
Saw'st thou my Daffodil?

She's in a frock of Lincoln green,
Which colour likes her sight,
And never hath her beauty seen,
But through a veil of white;

Than roses richer to behold,
That trim up lovers' bowers,
The pansy and the marigold,
Though Phœbus' paramours.

GORBO

Thou well describ'st the daffodil;
It is not full an hour,
Since by the spring, near yonder hill,
I saw that lovely flower.

BATTE

Yet my fair flower thou didst not meet
Nor news of her didst bring,
And yet my Daffodil's more sweet
Than that by yonder spring.

GORBO

I saw a shepherd that doth keep
In yonder field of lilies,
Was making (as he fed his sheep)
A wreath of daffodillies.

BATTE

Yet, Gorbo, thou delud'st me still,
  My flower thou didst not see;
For, know, my pretty Daffodil
  Is worn of none but me.

To show itself but near her feet
  No lily is so bold,
Except to shade her from the heat,
  Or keep her from the cold.

GORBO

Through yonder vale as I did pass,
  Descending from the hill,
I met a smirking bonny lass,
  They call her Daffodil:

Whose presence, as along she went,
  The pretty flowers did greet,
As though their heads they downward bent
  With homage to her feet.

And all the shepherds that were nigh,
  From top of every hill,
Unto the valleys loud did cry,
  There goes sweet Daffodil.

BATTE

Ay, gentle shepherd, now with joy
  Thou all my flocks dost fill,
That's she alone, kind shepherd boy;
  Let us to Daffodil.

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

ABROAD on a winter's night there ran
Under the starlight, leaping the rills
Swollen with snow-drip from the hills,
Goat-legged, goat-bearded Pan.

He loved to run on the crisp white floor,
Where black hill-torrents chiselled grooves,
And he loved to print his clean-cut hooves,
Where none had trod before.

And now he slacked and came to a stand
Beside a river too broad to leap;
And as he panted he heard a sheep
That bleated near at hand.

'Bell-wether, bell-wether, what do you say?
Peace, and huddle your ewes from cold!'
'Master, but ere we went to fold
Our herdsman hastened away.

'Over the hill came other twain
And pointed away to Bethlehem,
And spake with him, and he followed them,
And has not come again.

'He dropped his pipe of the river-reed;
He left his scrip in his haste to go;
And all our grazing is under snow,
So that we cannot feed.'

'Left his sheep on a winter's night?'
Pan folded them with an angry frown.
'Bell-wether, bell-wether, I'll go down
Where the star shines bright.'

Down by the hamlet he met the man.
'Shepherd, no shepherd, thy flock is lorn!'
'Master, no master, a child is born
Royal, greater than Pan.

'Lo, I have seen; I go to my sheep;
Follow my footsteps through the snow,
But warily, warily see thou go,
For child and mother sleep.'

Into the stable-yard Pan crept,
And there in a manger a baby lay
Beside his mother upon the hay,
And mother and baby slept.

Pan bent over the sleeping child,
Gazed on him, panting after his run;
And while he wondered, the little one
Opened his eyes and smiled;

Smiled, and after a little space
Struggled an arm from the swaddling-band,
And raising a tiny dimpled hand,
Patted the bearded face.

Something snapped in the breast of Pan;
His heart, his throat, his eyes were sore,
And he wished to weep as never before
Since the world began.

And out he went to the silly sheep,
To the fox on the hill, the fish in the sea,
The horse in the stall, the bird in the tree,
Asking them how to weep.

They could not teach—they did not know;
The law stands writ for the beast that's dumb
That a limb may ache and a heart be numb,
But never a tear can flow.

So bear you kindly to-day, O Man,
To all that is dumb and all that is wild,
For the sake of the Christmas Babe who smiled
In the eyes of great god Pan.

FRANK SIDGWICK.

THE GREEN LINNET

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard-seat!
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest:
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion!

Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May,
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment;
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair,
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel-trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perch'd in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives—
A Brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves
Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
While fluttering in the bushes.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE OWL

When cats run home and light is come,
And dew is cold upon the ground,
And the far-off stream is dumb,
And the whirring sail goes round,
And the whirring sail goes round:
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,
And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch
Twice or thrice his roundelay,
Twice or thrice his roundelay:
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

NICHOLAS NYE

THISTLE and darnel and dock grew there,
And a bush, in the corner, of may,
On the orchard wall I used to sprawl
In the blazing heat of the day;
Half asleep and half awake,
While the birds went twittering by,
And nobody there my lone to share
But Nicholas Nye.

Nicholas Nye was lean and gray,
Lame of a leg and old,
More than a score of donkey's years
He had seen since he was foaled;
He munched the thistles, purple and spiked,
Would sometimes stoop and sigh,
And turn to his head, as if he said,
'Poor Nicholas Nye!'

Alone with his shadow he'd drowse in the meadow,
Lazily swinging his tail,
At break of day he used to bray—
Not much too hearty and hale;
But a wonderful gumption was under his skin,
And a clear calm light in his eye,
And once in a while, he'd smile—
Would Nicholas Nye.

Seem to be smiling at me, he would,
From his bush in the corner, of may,—
Bony and ownerless, widowed and worn
Knobble-kneed, lonely and gray;

And over the grass would seem to pass
'Neath the deep dark blue of the sky,
Something much better than words between me
And Nicholas Nye.

But dusk would come in the apple boughs,
The green of the glow-worm shine,
The birds in nest would crouch to rest,
And home I'd trudge to mine;
And there in the moonlight, dark with dew,
Asking not wherefore nor why,
Would brood like a ghost, and as still as a post,
Old Nicholas Nye.

WALTER DE LA MARE.

A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seem'd a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

LAWN AS WHITE AS DRIVEN SNOW

Lawn as white as driven snow;
Cypress black as e'er was crow;
Gloves as sweet as damask roses;
Masks for faces and for noses;
Bugle bracelet, necklace amber,
Perfume for a lady's chamber;
Golden quoifs and stomachers,
For my lads to give their dears:
Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
What maids lack from head to heel:
Come buy of me, come; come buy, come buy;
Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry:
Come buy.

William Shakespeare.

OVER HILL, OVER DALE

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours;
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

A SONG

A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

PACK, CLOUDS, AWAY

Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,
With night we banish sorrow;
Sweet air blow soft, mount lark aloft
To give my Love good-morrow!
Wings from the wind to please her mind
Notes from the lark I'll borrow;
Bird prune thy wing, nightingale sing,
To give my Love good-morrow;
To give my Love good-morrow
Notes from them all I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, Robin-redbreast,
Sing birds in every furrow;
And from each bill, let music shrill
Give my fair Love good-morrow!
Blackbird and thrush in every bush,
Stare, linnet, and cock-sparrow,
You pretty elves, amongst yourselves
Sing my fair Love good-morrow!
To give my Love good-morrow
Sing birds in every furrow!

Thomas Heywood.

THE BONNY EARL OF MURRAY

Ye Highlands and ye Lawlands,
O where hae ye been?
They hae slain the Earl of Murray,
And hae laid him on the green.

Now wae be to thee, Huntley,
And whairfore did you sae?
I bade you bring him wi' you,
But forbade you him to slay.

He was a braw gallant,
And he rid at the ring;
And the bonny Earl of Murray,
O he might hae been a king!

He was a braw gallant,
And he play'd at the ba';
And the bonny Earl of Murray
Was the flower amang them a'!

He was a braw gallant,
And he play'd at the glove;
And the bonny Earl of Murray,
He was the queen's luve!

O lang will his Lady
Look owre the Castle Downe,
Ere she see the Earl of Murray
Come sounding through the town.

Anonymous.

HELEN OF KIRCONNELL

I

I WISH I were where Helen lies,
Night and day on me she cries;
O that I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirconnell lea!

II

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
And died to succour me!

III

O think na ye my heart was sair,
When my Love dropp'd and spak nae mair!
There did she swoon wi' meikle care,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

IV

As I went down the water side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

V

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hackèd him in pieces sma',
I hackèd him in pieces sma',
For her sake that died for me.

VI

O Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll mak a garland o' thy hair,
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
Until the day I dee!

VII

O that I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
Says, 'Haste, and come to me!'

VIII

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
If I were with thee, I'd be blest,
Where thou lies low and taks thy rest,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

IX

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding sheet drawn owre my een,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

X

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
And I am weary of the skies,
For her sake that died for me.

ANONYMOUS.

I SAW THREE SHIPS

I

As I sat under a sycamore tree,
—A sycamore-tree, a sycamore-tree,
I looked me out upon the sea
On Christ's Sunday at morn.

II

I saw three ships a-sailing there,
—A-sailing there, a-sailing there,
Jesu, Mary, and Joseph they bare
On Christ's Sunday at morn.

III

Joseph did whistle and Mary did sing,
—Mary did sing, Mary did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring
For joy our Lord was born.

IV

O they sail'd in to Bethlehem!
—To Bethlehem, to Bethlehem;
Saint Michael was the sterèsman,
Saint John sate in the horn.

V

And all the bells on earth did ring
—On earth did ring, on earth did ring;
'Welcome be thou, Heaven's King,
On Christ's Sunday at morn!'

ANONYMOUS.

LORD RANDAL

I

'O WHERE hae ye been, Lord Randal, my son?
O where hae ye been, my handsome young man?'—
'I hae been to the wild wood; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

II

'Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?'—
'I dined wi' my true-love; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

III

'What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?'
'I gat eels boil'd in broo'; mother, make my bed soon
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

IV

'What beeame of your bloodhounds, Lord Randal, my son?
What beeame of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?'—
'O they swell'd and they died; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.'

V

'O I fear ye are poison'd, Lord Randal, my son!
O I fear ye are poison'd, my handsome young man!'—
'O yes! I am poison'd; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down.'

ANONYMOUS.

THE ELIXIR

TEACH me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee:

Not rudely, as a beast,
To runne into an action;
But still to make thee prepossest,
And give it his perfection.

A man that looks on glasse,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
And then the heav'n espie.

All may of thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with his tincture (for thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgerie divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for lesse be told

GEORGE HERBERT.

THE BELLS OF HEAVEN

'Twould ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal of years,
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.

RALPH HODGSON.

ODE

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there!

WILLIAM COLLINS.

AND DID THOSE FEET IN ANCIENT TIME

And did those feet in ancient time
  Walk upon England's mountain green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
  On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the countenance divine
  Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
  Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
  Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold!
  Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
  Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
  In England's green and pleasant land.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

HE THAT LOVES A ROSY CHEEK

He that loves a rosy cheek
  Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek
  Fuel to maintain his fires;
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
  Gentle thoughts, and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined,
  Kindle never-dying fires :—
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes.

THOMAS CAREW.

TIME, YOU OLD GIPSY MAN

Time, you old gipsy man,
  Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
  Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,

Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing,
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may,
Time, you old gipsy,
Why hasten away?

Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,
Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein—
Only a moment,
And off once again;
Off to some city
Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.
Time, you old gipsy man,
  Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
  Just for one day?

RALPH HODGSON.

MAESIA'S SONG

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content;
The quiet mind is richer than a crown;
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent;
The poor estate scorns fortune's angry frown:
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss,
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.

The homely house that harbours quiet rest;
The cottage that affords no pride nor care;
The mean that 'grees with country music best;
The sweet consort of mirth and modest fare;
Obscurèd life sets down a type of bliss:
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

Robert Greene.

WHAT PLEASURE HAVE GREAT PRINCES

What pleasure have great princes
More dainty to their choice
Than herdsmen wild, who careless,
In quiet life rejoice,
And fortune's fate not fearing
Sing sweet in summer morning?

Their dealings plain and rightful,
Are void of all deceit;
They never know how spiteful
It is to kneel and wait
On favourite presumptuous
Whose pride is vain and sumptuous.

All day their flocks each tendeth;
  At night they take their rest;
More quiet than who sendeth
  His ship into the East,
Where gold and pearl are plenty;
But getting, very dainty.

For lawyers and their pleading,
  They 'steem it not a straw;
They think that honest meaning
  Is of itself a law:
Whence conscience judgeth plainly,
They spend no money vainly.

O happy who thus liveth!
  Not caring much for gold;
With clothing which sufficeth
  To keep him from the cold.
Though poor and plain his diet,
Yet merry it is, and quiet.

ANONYMOUS.

VERSES WRITTEN IN THE TOWER THE NIGHT BEFORE HE WAS BEHEADED

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares;
My feast of joy is but a dish of pain;
My crop of corn is but a field of tares;
And all my good is but vain hope of gain;
The day is fled, and yet I saw no sun;
And now I live, and now my life is done!

The spring is past, and yet it hath not sprung;
The fruit is dead, and yet the leaves are green;
My youth is gone, and yet I am but young;
I saw the world, and yet I was not seen;
My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun;
And now I live, and now my life is done!

I sought my death, and found it in my womb;
I looked for life, and saw it was a shade;
I trod the earth, and knew it was my tomb;
And now I die, and now I am but made;
The glass is full, and now my glass is run;
And now I live, and now my life is done!

CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE.

THE PERFECT LIFE

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make Man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.

BEN JONSON.

TIME GOES BY TURNS

THE lopped tree in time may grow again,
Most naked plants renew both fruit and flower;
The sorriest wight may find release of pain,
The driest soil suck in some moistening shower:
Time goes by turns, and chances change by course,
From foul to fair, from better hap to worse.

The sea of Fortune doth not ever flow,
She draws her favours to the lowest ebb;
Her tides have equal times to come and go,
Her loom doth weave the fine and coarsest web.
No joy so great but runneth to an end,
No hap so hard but may in fine amend.

Not always fall of leaf, nor ever spring,
Not endless night, not yet eternal day:
The saddest birds a season find to sing;—
The roughest storm a ealm may soon allay:
Thus, with succeeding turns, God tempereth all,
That man may hope to rise, yet fear to fall.

A chance may win that by misehance was lost;
The net that holds no great, takes little fish;
In some things all, in all things none are eross'd,
Few all they need, but none have all they wish;
Unmeddled joys here to no man befall,
Who least, hath some; who most, hath never all.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

DEATH

How weak a star doth rule mankind,
  Whieh owes its ruin to the same
Causes which Nature had designed
  To eherish and preserve the frame!

As eommonwealths may be secure,
  And no remote invasion dread,
Yet may a sadder fall endure
  From traitors in their bosom bred,

So while we feel no violence,
  And in our active health do trust,
A seeret hand doth snateh us henee,
  And tumble us into the dust.

Yet carelessly we run our race
  As if we could death's summons waive;
And think not on the narrow space
  Between a cradle and a grave.

But since we cannot death repricve,
  Our souls and fame we ought to mind,
For they our bodies will survive:
  That goes beyond, this stays behind.

If I be sure my soul is safe,
  And that my actions will provide
My tomb a nobler epitaph,
  Than that I only lived and died,

So that in various accidents
  I conscience may and honour keep:
I with that ease and innocence
  Shall die, as infants go to sleep.

KATHERINE PHILLIPS.

THE ISLES OF GREECE

The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung.
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse:
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo farther west
Than your sires' 'Islands of the Blest.'

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must the lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ!

What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, 'Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!'
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
And shed the blood of Scio's vine!
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet;
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

The tyrant of the Chersonese
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!
Oh! that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood might own.

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells;
In native swords, and native ranks,
The only hope of courage dwells:
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
  Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
  But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
  Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
  There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

BYRON.

THE ATHEIST AND THE ACORN

METHINKS this world is oddly made,
  And ev'ry thing's amiss,
A dull, presuming Atheist said,
As stretch'd he lay beneath a shade;
  And instanced in this:

Behold, quoth he, that mighty thing,
  A *Pumpkin*, large and round,
Is held but by a little string,
Which upwards cannot make it spring,
  Or bear it from the ground.

Whilst on this *Oak*, a fruit so small,
So disproportion'd grows;
That who with sense surveys this *All*,
This universal Causal Ball,
Its ill contrivance knows.

My better judgment would have hung
That weight upon a tree,
And left this mast, thus slightly strung,
'Mongst things which on the surface sprung,
And small and feeble be.

No more the caviller could say,
Nor further faults descry;
For, as he upwards gazing lay,
An *Acorn*, loosen'd from the stay,
Fell down upon his eye.

Th' offended part with tears ran o'er,
As punish'd for the sin:
Fool! had that bough a *Pumpkin* bore,
Thy whimseys must have worked no more,
Nor skull had kept them in.

ANNE, COUNTESS OF WINCHELSEA.

THE WORLD A GAME

This world a-hunting is,
The prey poor man, the Nimrod fierce is Death;
His speedy greyhounds are
Lust, sickness, envy, care,
Strife that ne'er falls amiss,
With all those ills which haunt us while we breathe.
Now, if by chance we fly
Of these the eager chase,
Old age with stealing pace
Casts up his nets, and there we panting die.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND.

REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

I

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The River Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its walls on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied:
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
'"Tis clear,' cried they, 'our Mayor's a noddy;
And as for our Corporation—shocking

To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What's best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease!
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!'
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in Council;
At length the Mayor broke silence:
'For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell—
I wish I were a mile hence!
It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
I'm sure my poor head aches again,
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh, for a trap, a trap, a trap!'
Just as he said this, what should hap,
At the chamber door, but a gentle tap.
'Bless us!' cried the Mayor, 'what's that?'
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous.)
'Only a scraping of shoes on the mat!
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!'

V

'Come in!' the Mayor cried, looking bigger,
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat, from heel to head,
Was half of yellow and half of red;
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin.
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: 'It's as if my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!'

VI

He advanced to the council table:
And, 'Please your honours,' said he, 'I'm able,
By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,—
The mole, the toad, the newt, the viper:
And people call me the Pied Piper.'
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match his coat of the self-same check,

And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon his pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
'Yet,' said he, 'poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarm of gnats;
I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampyre bats:
And as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders?'
'One! fifty thousand!' was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,
  Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
  In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe had uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling;
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,

Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
  Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails, and pricking whiskers,
  Families by tens and dozens;
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped, advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the River Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
—Save one, who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, 'At the first shrill note of the pipe
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:
And a moving away of pickle-tub boards,
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks;
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, "Oh, rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, dinner, supper, luncheon!"
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious, scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, "Come, bore me!"
—I found the Weser rolling o'er me.'

'And step for step, they followed dancing.'

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VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
'Go,' cried the Mayor, 'and get long poles!
Poke out the nests, and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!'—when suddenly up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, 'First, if you please, my thousand guilders!'

IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow,
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
'Beside,' quoth the Mayor, with a knowing wink,
Our business was done at the river's brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
So friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke;
But, as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in jokc.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;
A thousand guilders! come, take fifty!'

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
'No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
I've promised to visit by dinner-time
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor.
With him I proved no bargain-driver;
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe after another fashion!'

XI

'How!' cried the Mayor, 'd'ye think I'll brook
Being worse treated than a cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald!
You threaten us, fellow! Do your worst;
Blow your pipe there till you burst!'

XII

Once more he stept into the street,
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth, straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,

And, like fowls in a farmyard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
And all the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
—Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
And now the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
'He never can cross that mighty top!
He's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop!'
When, lo, as they reached the mountain side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced, and the children followed,

And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say—
'It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me:
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed, and fruit-trees grew.
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow-deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings:
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped, and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more!'

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that Heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate

As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
  Wherever it was man's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
  And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
  Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and the year,
These words did not as well appear:
'And so long after what happened here
  On the twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:'
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
  To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
  They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away;
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress,

On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned,
Long ago in a mighty band,
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from
mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our
promise!

ROBERT BROWNING.

PREPARATIONS

YET if His Majesty, our sovereign lord,
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say, 'I'll be your guest to-morrow night';
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! 'Let no man idle stand!

'Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall;
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat
And order taken that there want no meat.
See every sconce and candlestick made bright,
That without tapers they may give a light.

'Look to the presence: are the carpets spread,
The dazie o'er the head,
The cushions in the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place.'

Thus, if a king were coming, would we do;
And 'twere good reason too;
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost,
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.

But at the coming of the King of Heaven
All's set at six and seven;
We wallow in our sin,
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.
We entertain him always like a stranger,
And, as at first, still lodge him in the manger.

ANONYMOUS.

NOW THAT THE WINTER'S GONE

Now that the winter's gone, the earth hath lost
Her snow-white robes, and now no more the frost
Candies the grass, or culls an icy cream
Upon the silver lake, or crystal stream;
But the warm sun thaws the benumb'd earth
And makes it tender; gives a seeond birth
To the dead swallow; wakes in hollow tree
The drowsy cuekoo, and the humble bee;
Now do a choir of ehirping minstrels bring
In triumph to the world the youthful Spring.

THOMAS CAREW.

PAN

Sing his praises that doth keep
  Our flocks from harm,
Pan, the father of our sheep;
  And arm in arm
Tread we softly in a round,
Whilst the hollow neighbouring ground
Fills the music with her sound.

Pan, O great god Pan, to thee
  Thus do we sing!
Thou who keep'st us chaste and free
  As the young spring:
Ever be thy honour spoke,
From that place the morn is broke,
To that place day doth unyoke!

John Fletcher.

THE LAPFUL OF NUTS

Whene'er I see soft hazel eyes
  And nut-brown curls,
I think of those bright days I spent
  Among the Limerick girls;
When up through Cratla woods I went
  Nutting with thee,
And we pluck'd the glossy clustering fruit
  From many a bending tree.

Beneath the hazel boughs we sat,
  Thou, love, and I,
And the gather'd nuts lay in thy lap,
  Beneath thy downcast eye;
But little we thought of the store we'd won,
  I, love, or thou;
For our hearts were full, and we dared not own
  The love that's spoken now.

Oh, there's wars for willing hearts in Spain,
  And high Germanie!
And I'll come back, ere long, again
  With knightly fame and fee:
And I'll come back, if I ever come back,
  Faithful to thee,
That sat with thy white lap full of nuts,
  Beneath the hazel-tree.

SAMUEL FERGUSON.

MY HEART LEAPS UP

MY heart leaps up when I behold
  A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old,
    Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man:
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE DAFFODILS

I WANDERED lonely as a cloud
  That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
  A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
  And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
  Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
  Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:
A Poet could not but be gay
  In such a jocund company!
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
  In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
  Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE BEANFIELD

A BEANFIELD in blossom smells as sweet
As Araby, or groves of orange flowers;
Black-eyed and white, and feathered to one's feet,
How sweet they smell in morning's dewy hours.
When seething night is left upon the flowers,
Another morn's sun shines brightly o'er the field,
The bean bloom glitters in the gems of showers,
And sweet the fragrance which the union yields
To battered footpaths crossing o'er the fields.

JOHN CLARE.

A SONG

FOR Mercy, Courage, Kindness, Mirth,
There is no measure upon earth.
Nay, they wither, root and stem,
If an end be set to them.

Overbrim and overflow,
If your own heart you would know;
For the spirit born to bless
Lives but in its own excess.

LAURENCE BINYON.

THE MAN OF LIFE UPRIGHT

THE man of life upright,
  Whose cheerful mind is free
From weight of impious deeds,
  And yoke of vanity;

The man whose silent days
  In harmless joys are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude,
  Nor sorrows discontent;

That man needs neither towers,
  Nor armour for defence,
Nor vaults his guilt to shroud
  From thunder's violence;

He only can behold
  With unaffrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep,
  And terrors of the skies.

Thus, scorning all the cares
  That fate or fortune brings,
His book the heavens he makes,
  His wisdom heavenly things;

Good thoughts his surest friends,
  His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober inn
  And quiet pilgrimage.

THOMAS CAMPION.

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle—
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdain'd its brother:
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea—
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

TO LUCASTA. GOING TO THE WARS

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True: a new Mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such,
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Lov'd I not Honour more.

RICHARD LOVELACE.

SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE POET'S DREAM

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aerial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
  Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
  Nurslings of immortality!

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

THE WORLD

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
  The winds that will be howling at all hours,
  And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
  A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

SWEET PEACE

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged sentry
All skilful in the wars.
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious Friend,
And—O my soul,—awake!—
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress and thy ease.
Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes—
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

HENRY VAUGHAN.

THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

How happy is he born and taught
  That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
  And simple truth his utmost skill;

Whose passions not his masters are;
  Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Untied unto the world by care
  Of public fame or private breath;

Who envies none that chance doth raise,
  Nor vice; who never understood
How deepest wounds are given by praise,
  Nor rules of state, but rules of good;

Who hath his life from rumours freed;
  Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
  Nor ruin make oppressors great.

Who God doth late and early pray
  More of his grace than gifts to lend;
And entertains the harmless day
  With a religious book or friend.

This man is freed from servile bands
  Of hope to rise or fear to fall:
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
  And, having nothing, yet hath all.

SIR HENRY WOTTON.

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

I STROVE with none, for none was worth my strife,
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

DEATH STANDS ABOVE ME

DEATH stands above me, whispering low
I know not what into my ear:
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

THE THRUSH'S NEST

WITHIN a thick and spreading hawthorn bush,
That overhung a molehill large and round,
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns to sunrise, and I drank the sound
With joy; and often, an intruding guest,
I watched her secret toil from day to day—
How true she warped the moss, to form a nest,
And modelled it within with wood and clay;
And by-and-by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers,
Ink-spotted over shells of greeny blue;
And there I witnessed in the sunny hours,
A brood of Nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

JOHN CLARE.

THE DANCING SEAL

When we were building Skua Light—
The first men who had lived a night
Upon that deep-sea Isle—
As soon as chisel touched the stone,
The friendly seals would come ashore;
And sit and watch us all the while,
As though they'd not seen men before;
And so, poor beasts, had never known
Men had the heart to do them harm.
They'd little cause to feel alarm
With us, for we were glad to find
Some friendliness in that strange sea;
Only too pleased to let them be
And sit as long as they'd a mind
To watch us; for their eyes were kind
Like women's eyes, it seemed to me.

So, hour on hour, they sat: I think
They liked to hear the chisel's clink:
And when the boy sang loud and clear,
They scrambled closer in to hear;
And if he whistled sweet and shrill,
The queer beasts shuffled nearer still:
But every sleek and sheeny skin
Was mad to hear his violin.

When, work all over for the day,
He'd take his fiddle down and play
His merry tunes beside the sea,
Their eyes grew brighter and more bright,
And burned and twinkled merrily:

And as I watched them one still night,
And saw their eager sparkling eyes,
I felt those lively seals would rise
Some shiny night ere he could know,
And dance about him, heel and toe,
Unto the fiddle's heady tune.

And at the rising of the moon,
Half-daft, I took my stand before
A young seal lying on the shore;
And called on her to dance with me.
And it seemed hardly strange when she
Stood up before me suddenly,
And shed her black and sheeny skin;
And smiled, all eager to begin . . .
And I was dancing, heel and toe,
With a young maiden white as snow,
Unto a crazy violin.

We danced beneath the dancing moon,
All night, beside the dancing sea,
With tripping toes and skipping heels:
And all about us friendly seals
Like Christian folk were dancing reels
Unto the fiddle's endless tune
That kept on spinning merrily
As though it never meant to stop.
And never once the snow-white maid
A moment stayed
To take a breath,
Though I was fit to drop:

And while those wild eyes challenged me,
I knew as well as well could be
I must keep step with that young girl,
Though we should dance to death.

Then with a skirl
The fiddle broke:
The moon went out:
The sea stopped dead:
And, in a twinkling, all the rout
Of dancing folk had fled . . .
And in the chill, bleak dawn I woke
Upon the naked rock, alone.

They've brought me far from Skua Isle . . .
I laugh to think they do not know
That as, all day, I chip the stone,
Among my fellows here inland,
I smell the sea-wrack on the shore . . .
And see her snowy tossing hand,
And meet again her merry smile . . .
And dream I'm dancing all the while,
I'm dancing ever, heel and toe,
With a seal-maiden, white as snow,
On that moonshiny Island-strand,
For ever and for evermore.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON.

THE DONKEY

When fishes flew and forests walked
  And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
  Then surely I was born;

With monstrous head and sickening cry
  And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
  On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
  Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
  I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
  One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
  And palms before my feet.

G. K. Chesterton.

THE TIGER

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the ardour of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire—
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand form'd thy dread feet?

What the hammer, what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
Did God smile his work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

William Blake.

NETTED STRAWBERRIES

I AM a willow-wren :
I twitter in the grass on the chimney-top;
The apples far below will never drop
Or turn quite bright, though when

The aimless wind is still
I stand upon the big ones and I peck
And find soft places, leaving spot and speck
When I have munched my fill.

Apples and plums I know
(Plums are dark weights and full of golden rain
That wets neck-feathers when I dip and strain,
And stickys each plumy row),

But past my well-kept trees
The quick small woman in her puffy gown,
That flutters as if its sleeves and skirts had grown
For flying and airy ease,

Has planted little bushes
Of large cool leaves that cover and shade and hide
Things redder than plums and with gold dimples pied,
Dropping on new-cut rushes.

At first I thought with spite
Such heady scent was only a flower's wide cup;
But flower-scents never made my throat close up,
And so I stood in my flight.

Yet over all there sways
A web like those revealed by dawn and dew,
But not like those that break and let me through
Shivering the drops all ways.

Though I alight and swing
I never reach the things that tumble and crush,
And if I had such long large legs as a thrush
The web would tangle and cling.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY.

EPITAPH ON A HARE

HERE lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swifter greyhound follow,
Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,
Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo;

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
Who, nursed with tender care,
And to domestic bounds confined,
Was still a wild Jack hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
His pittance every night,
He did it with a jealous look,
And when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
And milk, and oats, and straw;
Thistles, or lettuces instead,
With sand to scour his maw.

On twigs of hawthorn he regaled,
On pippin's russet peel,
And, when his juicy salads failed,
Sliced carrot pleased him well.

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,
Whereon he loved to bound,
To skip and gambol like a fawn,
And swing his rump around.

His frisking was at evening hours,
For then he lost his fear,
But most before approaching showers,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round-rolling moons,
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And every night at play.

I kept him for his humour's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

But now beneath this walnut shade
He finds his long last home,
And waits, in snug concealment laid,
Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more aged, feels the shocks
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

WILLIAM COWPER.

TO THE LARK

Good speed, for I this day
Betimes my matins say,
Because I do
Begin to woo.
Sweet singing lark,
Be thou the clerk,
And know thy when
To say Amen.
And if I prove
Blest in my love,
Then thou shalt be
High Priest to me,
At my return
To incense burn,
And so to solemnise
Love's and my sacrifice.

ROBERT HERRICK

THE OXEN

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
'Now they are all on their knees,'
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If some one said on Christmas Eve,
'Come; see the oxen kneel

'In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,'
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

THOMAS HARDY.

SYLVIA

WHO is Sylvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness,
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness,
And, being help'd, inhabits there.

Then to Sylvia let us sing,
That Sylvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Sylvia.

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NURSE'S SONG

When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

'Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies.'

'No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all cover'd with sheep.'

'Well, well, go and play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed.'
The little ones leap'd and shouted and laugh'd,
And all the hills echoèd.

William Blake.

SONG FROM 'PIPPA PASSES'

THE year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

ROBERT BROWNING.

SWEET AND LOW

SWEET and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dropping moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon:
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep

ALFRED TENNYSON.

SONG

How sweet I roam'd from field to field
  And tasted all the summer's pride,
Till I the prince of love beheld
  Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He show'd me lilies for my hair,
  And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair
  Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
  And Phœbus fired my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
  And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
  Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
  And mocks my loss of liberty.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

ROUNDELAY

O SING unto my roundelay,
O drop the briny tear with me,
Dance no more at holy-day,
Like a running river be.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Black his locks as the winter night,
White his skin as the summer snow,
Red his face as the morning light,
Cold he lies in the grave below.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
Quick in dance as thought can be,
Deft his tabor, cudgel stout,
O he lies by the willow-tree!
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Hark! the raven flaps his wing
In the briar'd dell below;
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing
To the nightmares as they go.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

See! the white moon shines on high;
Whiter is my true love's shroud;
Whiter than the morning sky,
Whiter than the evening cloud.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Here upon my true love's grave
Shall the barren flowers be laid;
Not one holy Saint to save
All the coldness of a maid!
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

With my hands I'll gird the briars
Round his holy corse to grow.
Elfin Faery, light your fires;
Here my body still shall bow.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Come, with acorn-cup and thorn,
Drain my heartè's blood away;
Life and all its good I scorn,
Dance by night or feast by day.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

LAUGHING SONG

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing 'Ha, Ha, He!'

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of 'Ha, Ha, He!'

WILLIAM BLAKE.

IN LADY STREET

All day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops—
Fried fish, old clothes, and fortune-tellers—
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. 'Buy, buy!' the sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the gray
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and gray and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,
A lord not comely-housed, a god,
Seeing what gods must blush to see,
A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray despiteously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one gray man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,

Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone—yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Ay, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this gray man plies
A trade, a coloured trade. A show
Of many-coloured merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,
And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester ground,
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,
And gaudy brave chrysanthemums.
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers;
And times a prize of violets,

Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned.
And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favour stirs
Gay daffodils this gray man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long
In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,
And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this gray man heeds not at all
The hell of Lady Street. His stall
Of many-coloured merchandise
He makes a shining paradise,
As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not
Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of colour through the air;
The gray man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

DEAR IS MY LITTLE NATIVE VALE

Dear is my little native vale,
  The ring-dove builds and murmurs there;
Close by my cot she tells her tale
  To every passing villager;
The squirrel leaps from tree to tree,
And shells his nuts at liberty.

In orange-groves and myrtle-bowers,
  That breathe a gale of fragrance round,
I charm the fairy-footed hours
  With my loved lute's romantic sound;
Or crowns of living laurel weave
For those that win the race at eve.

The shepherd's horn at break of day,
  The ballet danced in twilight glade,
The canzonet and roundelay
  Sung in the silent greenwood shade:
These simple joys, that never fail,
Shall bind me to my native vale.

Samuel Rogers.

UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

SEPT. 3, 1802

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

'O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the Lake,
And no birds sing.

'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms!
So haggard and so woebegone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

'I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.'

'I met a Lady in the Meads,
Full beautiful—a fairy's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

'I made a garland for her head,
And braeelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

'I set her on my paeing steed
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A fairy's song.

'She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said
"I love thee true."

'She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

'And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill-side.

'La belle Dame sans Merci.'

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'I saw pale Kings and Princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—"La belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

'I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

'And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the Lake
And no birds sing.'

JOHN KEATS.

THE MAD MAID'S SONG

GOOD-MORROW to the day so fair;
Good-morning, sir, to you;
Good-morrow to mine own torn hair,
Bedabbled with the dew.

Good-morning to this primrose too;
Good-morrow to each maid;
That will with flowers the tomb bestrew
Wherein my Love is laid.

Ah! woe is me, woe, woe is me,
Alack and well-a-day!
For pity, sir, find out that bee,
Which bore my Love away.

I'll seek him in your bonnet brave;
  I'll seek him in your eyes;
Nay, now I think they've made his grave
  I' th' bed of strawberries.

I'll seek him there; I know, ere this,
  The cold, cold earth doth shake him;
But I will go, or send a kiss
  By you, sir, to awake him.

Pray hurt him not; though he be dead,
  He knows well who do love him;
And who with green turfs rear his head,
  And who do rudely move him.

He's soft and tender, pray take heed,
  With bands of cowslips bind him,
And bring him home;—but 'tis decreed
  That I shall never find him.

ROBERT HERRICK.

OVERHEARD ON A SALTMARSH

Nymph, nymph, what are your beads?
Green glass, goblin. Why do you stare at them?
Give them me.
No.
Give them me. Give them me.
No.
Then I will howl all night in the reeds,
Lie in the mud and howl for them.

Goblin, why do you love them so?

They are better than stars or water,
Better than voices of winds that sing,
Better than any man's fair daughter,
Your green glass beads on a silver ring.

Hush, I stole them out of the moon.

Give me your beads, I desire them.
No.
I will howl in a deep lagoon
For your green glass beads, I love them so,
Give them me. Give them.
No.

Harold Monro.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red!
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here, Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores! and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman.

A JACOBITE'S EPITAPH

To my true king I offered free from stain
Courage and faith; vain faith, and courage vain.
For him I threw lands, honours, wealth, away,
And one dear hope, that was more prized than they.
For him I languished in a foreign clime,
Grey-haired with sorrow in my manhood's prime;
Heard on Lavernia Scargill's whispering trees,
And pined by Arno for my lovelier Tees;
Beheld each night my home in fevered sleep,
Each morning started from the dream to weep;
Till God, who saw me tried too sorely, gave
The resting-place I asked, an early grave.
O thou, whom chance leads to this nameless stone,
From that proud country which was once mine own,
By those white cliffs I never more must see,
By that dear language which I spake like thee,
Forget all feuds, and shed one English tear
O'er English dust. A broken heart lies here.

LORD MACAULAY.

DRAKE'S DRUM

Drake he's in his hammock an' a thousand mile away,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Slung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Yarnder lumes the Island, yarnder lie the ships,
Wi' sailor lads a danein' heel-an'-toe,
An' the shore-lights flashin', an' the night-tide dashin',
He sees et arl so plainly as he saw et long ago.

Drake he was Devon man, an' rüled the Devon seas,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
And' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
'Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago.'

Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Slung atween the round shot, listenin' for the drum,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;
When the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin',
They shall find him ware an' wakin', as they found him long ago.

HENRY NEWBOLT.

A WET SHEET AND A FLOWING SEA

A WET sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast;
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee.

O for a soft and gentle wind!
I heard a fair one cry;
But give to me the snoring breeze,
And white waves heaving high;
And white waves heaving high, my boys,
The good ship tight and free—
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we.

There's tempest in yon horned moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners!
The wind is piping loud;
The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashing free—
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

THE BAYLIFFE'S DAUGHTER OF ISLINGTON

THERE was a youth, a well-beloved youth,
And he was a squire's son;
He loved the bayliffe's daughter dear,
That lived in Islington.

Yet she was coy and would not believe
That he did love her so,
No nor at any time would she
Any countenance to him show.

But when his friends did understand
His fond and foolish mind,
They sent him up to faire London
An apprentice for to bind.

And when he had been seven long years,
And never his love could see:
Many a tear have I shed for her sake,
When she little thought of me.

Then all the maids of Islington
Went forth to sport and play,
All but the bayliffe's daughter dear;
She secretly stole away.

She pulled off her gown of green,
And put on ragged attire,
And to faire London she would go
Her true love to inquire.

And as she went along the high road,
The weather being hot and dry,

She sat her down upon a green bank,
  And her true love came riding bye.

She started up, with a colour so redd,
  Catching hold of his bridle-reine;
One penny, one penny, kind sir, she said,
  Will ease me of much pain.

Before I give you one penny, sweetheart,
  Pray tell me where you were born.
At Islington, kind sir, said she,
  Where I have had many a scorn.

I prythe, sweetheart, then tell to me,
  O tell me, whether you know,
The bayliffe's daughter of Islington.
  She is dead, sir, long ago.

If she be dead, then take my horse,
  My saddle and bridle also;
For I will unto some far country,
  Where no man shall me know.

O stay, O stay, thou goodly youth,
  She standeth by thy side;
She is here alive, she is not dead,
  And ready to be thy bride.

O farewell grief, and welcome joy,
  Ten thousand times therefore;
For now I have found mine own true love,
  Whom I thought I should never see more.

ANONYMOUS.

RESIGNATION

Why, why repine, my pensive friend,
  At pleasures slipp'd away?
Some the stern Fates will never lend,
  And all refuse to stay.

I see the rainbow in the sky,
  The dew upon the grass;
I see them, and I ask not why
  They glimmer or they pass.

With folded arms I linger not
  To call them back; 'twere vain:
In this, or in some other spot,
  I know they'll shine again.

Walter Savage Landor.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

So now is come our joyful'st feast;
  Let every man be jolly.
Each room with ivy-leaves is dress'd,
  And every post with holly.
Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine,
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
  And let us all be merry.

Now all our neighbours' chimneys smoke,
  And Christmas-blocks are burning;
Their ovens they with baked meat choke,
  And all their spits are turning.
Without the door let sorrow lie;
And, if for cold it hap to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie
  And evermore be merry!

Now every lad is wondrous trim,
  And no man minds his labour;
Our lasses have provided them
  A bag-pipe and a tabor.
Young men, and maids, and girls, and boys,
Give life to one another's joys,
And you anon shall by their noise
  Perceive that they are merry.

Rank misers now do sparing shun;
  Their hall of music soundeth;
And dogs thence with whole shoulders run;
  So all things there aboundeth.

The country folks themselves advance
With crowdy-muttons out of France;
And Jack shall pipe, and Jill shall dance,
And all the town be merry!

Ned Swash hath fetch'd his bands from pawn,
And all his best apparel;
Brisk Nell hath bought a ruff of lawn
With droppings of the barrel;
And those that hardly all the year
Had bread to eat or rags to wear,
Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
And all the day be merry.

Now poor men to the justices
With capons make their arrants,
And if they hap to fail of these
They plague them with their warrants.
But now they feed them with good cheer,
And what they want they take in beer,
For Christmas comes but once a year,
And then they shall be merry.

Good farmers in the country nurse
The poor that else were undone;
Some landlords spend their money worse,
On lust and pride in London.
There the roysters they do play,
Drab and dice their lands away,
Which may be ours another day,
And therefore let's be merry!

The client now his suit forbears;
The prisoner's heart is eased;
The debtor drinks away his cares,
And for the time is pleased.
Though others' purses be more fat,
Why should we pine or grieve at that?
Hang sorrow! care will kill a cat,
And therefore let's be merry!

Hark! now the wags abroad do call
Each other forth to rambling;
Anon you'll see them in the hall,
For nuts and apples scrambling.
Hark how the roofs with laughters sound!
Anon they'll think the house goes round,
For they the cellar's depth have found,
And there they will be merry.

The wenches with their wassail-bowls
About the streets are singing,
The boys are come to catch the owls,
The wild mare in is bringing.
Our kitchen-boy hath broke his box,
And to the dealing of the ox,
Our honest neighbours come by flocks,
And here they will be merry.

Now kings and queens poor sheepcotes have,
And mate with everybody;
The honest now may play the knave,
And wise men play at noddy.

Some youths will now a-mumming go,
Some others play at rowland-hoe,
And twenty other game boys moe,
  Because they will be merry.

Then wherefore in these merry days
  Should we, I pray, be duller?
No; let us sing some roundelays
  To make our mirth the fuller.
And, whilst thus inspir'd we sing,
Let all the streets with echoes ring;
Woods, and hills, and everything,
  Bear witness we are merry!

GEORGE WITHER.

EPITAPH ON CHARLES II.

HERE lies our Sovereign Lord the King,
  Whose word no man relies on,
Who never said a foolish thing,
  Nor ever did a wise one.

THE EARL OF ROCHESTER.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

SWEET Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's ling'ring blooms delay'd:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene;
How often have I paused on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whisp'ring lovers made;
How often have I bless'd the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd;
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And sleight of art and feats of strength went round;
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter titter'd round the place;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove:
These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,

With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms—But all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain:
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges, works its weedy way.
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mould'ring wall;
And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:

His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brighten'd all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet AUBURN! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruin'd grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.
In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill,

Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations pass'd,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
How happy he who crowns in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
No surly porter stands in guilty state
To spurn imploring famine from the gate;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending Virtue's friend;
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
While Resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects bright'ning to the last,
His Heaven commences ere the world be pass'd!

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came soften'd from below;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that low'd to meet their young;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school;
The watchdog's voice that bay'd the whisp'ring wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind:

'Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.'

These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And fill'd each pause the nightingale had made.
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
All but yon widow'd, solitary thing
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn;
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wand'rings, but relieved their pain;
The long-remember'd beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;

The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talk'd the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings lean'd to Virtue's side.
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt, for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and Anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last falt'ring accents whisper'd praise.
At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.
The service pass'd, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
Even children follow'd with endearing wile,
And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's smile.

His ready smile a parent's warmth express'd,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distress'd;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
The village master taught his little school;
A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laugh'd, with counterfeited glee,
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd;
Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village all declared how much he knew;
'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing too, the parson own'd his skill,
For e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thund'ring sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.

But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumph'd, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where gray-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place;
The white-wash'd wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnish'd clock that click'd behind the door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
The hearth, except when winter chill'd the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glisten'd in a row.

Vain, transitory splendours! Could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his pond'rous strength, and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;

Nor the coy maid, half willing to be press'd,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined:
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth array'd,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
'Tis yours to judge, how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore;
Hoards, e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;

The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
Has robb'd the neighbouring fields of half their growth;
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies;
While thus the land adorn'd for pleasure, all
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female unadorn'd and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrow'd charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes:
But when those charms are pass'd, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress.
Thus fares the land, by luxury betray'd,
In nature's simplest charms at first array'd;
But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;
While scourged by famine from the smiling land,
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden and a grave.

Where then, ah! where, shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits stray'd,
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped—What waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;

To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury and thin mankind;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know
Extorted from his fellow creature's woe.
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign
Here, richly deck'd, admits the gorgeous train;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts?—Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shiv'ring female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty bless'd,
Has wept at tales of innocence distress'd;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;
Now lost to all, her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

Do thine, sweet AUBURN, thine, the loveliest train—
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!

Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charm'd before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
Those pois'nous fields with rank luxuriance crown'd,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey
And savage men more murd'rous still than they,
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only shelter'd thefts of harmless love.
Good Heaven! what sorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That call'd them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure pass'd,
Hung round their bowers, and fondly look'd their last,
And took a long farewell, and wish'd in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main;
And shudd'ring still to face the distant deep,
Return'd and wept, and still return'd to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;

But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wish'd for worlds beyond the grave,
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And bless'd the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kiss'd her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And clasp'd them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.

O Luxury! thou curs'd by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions, with insidious joy
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own;
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
Till sapp'd their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.
E'en now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done;
E'en now, methinks, as pond'ring here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land:
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with ev'ry gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness, are there;

And piety, with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell, and Oh! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime;
Aid slighted truth; with thy persuasive strain
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that states of native strength possess'd,
Though very poor, may still be very bless'd;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

THE PLOUGH

Above yon sombre swell of land
  Thou see'st the dawn's grave orange hue,
With one pale streak like yellow sand,
  And over that a vein of blue.

The air is cold above the woods;
  All silent is the earth and sky,
Except with his own lonely moods
  The blackbird holds a colloquy.

Over the broad hill creeps a beam,
  Like hope that gilds a good man's brow;
And now ascends the nostril-stream
  Of stalwart horses come to plough.

Ye rigid Ploughmen, bear in mind
  Your labour is for future hours:
Advance—spare not—nor look behind—
  Plough deep and straight with all your powers.

Richard Henry Horne.

THE REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
  Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
  Stop here, or gently pass!

Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;
I listen'd, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

'Alone she cuts and binds the grain.'

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THE WINDMILL

THE green corn waving in the dale,
The ripe grass waving on the hill:
I lean across the paddock pale
And gaze upon the giddy mill.

Its hurtling sails a mighty sweep
Cut thro' the air: with rushing sound
Each strikes in fury down the steep,
Rattles, and whirls in chase around.

Beside his sacks the miller stands
On high within the open door:
A book and pencil in his hands,
His grist and meal he reckoneth o'er.

His tireless merry slave, the wind,
Is busy with his work to-day:
From whencesoe'er he comes to grind;
He hath a will and knows the way.

He gives the creaking sails a spin,
The circling millstones faster flee,
The shuddering timbers groan within,
And down the shoot the meal runs free.

The miller giveth him no thanks,
And doth not much his work o'erlook:
He stands beside the sacks, and ranks
The figures in his dusty book.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

THE ICE CART

PERCHED on my city office-stool
I watched with envy, while a cool
And lucky carter handled ice. . . .
And I was wandering in a trice,
Far from the gray and grimy heat
Of that intolerable street,
O'er sapphire berg and emerald floe,
Beneath the still, cold ruby glow
Of everlasting Polar night,
Bewildered by the queer half-light,
Until I stumbled, unawares,
Upon a creek where big white bears
Plunged headlong down with flourished heels,
And floundered after shining seals
Through shivering seas of blinding blue.
And as I watched them, ere I knew,
I'd stripped, and I was swimming, too,
Among the seal-pack, young and hale,
And thrusting on with threshing tail,
With twist and twirl and sudden leap
Through crackling ice and salty deep—
Diving and doubling with my kind,
Until, at last, we left behind
Those big white, blundering bulks of death,
And lay, at length, with panting breath
Upon a far untravelled floe,
Beneath a gentle drift of snow—
Snow drifting gently, fine and white,
Out of the endless Polar night,
Falling and falling evermore
Upon that far untravelled shore.

Till I was buried fathoms deep
Beneath that cold, white drifting sleep—
Sleep drifting deep,
Deep drifting sleep. . . .

The carter cracked a sudden whip:
I clutched my stool with startled grip,
Awakening to the grimy heat
Of that intolerable street.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON.

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO

JOHN ANDERSON my jo, John,
When we were first acquent
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snow;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither,
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo.

ROBERT BURNS.

THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY

(*Adapted from an Old French Chanson.*)

Goblins came, on mischief bent,
To Saint Anthony in Lent.

'Come, ye goblins, small and big,
We will kill the hermit's pig.

'While the good monk minds his book
We the hams will cure and cook.

'While he goes down on his knees
We will fry the sausages.

'While he on his breast doth beat
We will grill the tender feet.

'While he David's Psalms doth sing
We will all to table bring.'

On his knees went Anthony
To those imps of Barbary.

'Good, kind goblins, spare his life,
He to me is child and wife.

'He indeed is good and mild
As 'twere any chrisom child.

'He is my felicity,
Spare, oh spare my pig to me!'

But the pig they did not spare,
Did not heed the hermit's prayer.

They the hams did cure and cook,
Still the good Saint read his book.

When they fried the sausages
Still he rose not from his knees.

When they grilled the tender feet
He ceased not his breast to beat.

They did all to table bring,
He for grace the Psalms did sing.

All at once the morning broke,
From his dream the monk awoke.

There in the kind light of day
Was the little pig at play.

R. L. Gales.

HAD I A GOLDEN POUND

HAD I a golden pound to spend,
My love should mend and sew no more;
And I would buy her a little quern,
Easy to turn on the kitchen floor.

And for her windows curtains white,
With birds in flight and flowers in bloom,
To face with pride the road to town
And mellow down her sunlit room.

And with the silver change we'd prove
The truth of Love to life's own end,
With hearts the years could but embolden,
Had I a golden pound to spend.

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE.

MRS WILLOW

Mrs Thomas Willow seems very glum.
Her life, perhaps, is very lonely and hum-drum,
Digging up potatoes, cleaning out the weeds,
Doing the little for a lone woman's needs.
Who was her husband? How long ago?
What does she wonder? What does she know?
Why does she listen over the wall,
Morning and noon-time and twilight and all,
As though unforgotten were some footfall?

'Good-morning, Mrs Willow.' 'Good-morning, sir,'
Is all the conversation I can get from her.
And her path-stones are white as lilies of the wood,
And she washes this and that till she must be very good.
She sends no letters, and no one calls,
And she doesn't go whispering beyond her walls;
Nothing in her garden is secret, I think—
That's all sun-bright with foxglove and pink,
And she doesn't hover round old cupboards and shelves
As old people do who have buried themselves;
She has no late lamps, and she digs all day
And polishes and plants in a common way,
But glum she is, and she listens now and then
For a footfall, a footfall, a footfall again,
And whether it's hope, or whether it's dread,
Or a poor old fancy in her head,
I shall never be told; it will never be said.

John Drinkwater.

THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day,
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

RUPERT BROOKE.

THE TOYS

My little son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hard words and unkiss'd—
His mother, who was patient, being dead—
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet

From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters, and a red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach,
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells,
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness.'

COVENTRY PATMORE.

PLAINT OF AN HUMBLE SERVANT

(*For Edward Elgar*)

O Lord, who didst create all things
That run on legs or rise on wings,
Who in Thy equal care of all
Dost no less mark the sparrow's fall
Than of great sinner or great saint,
Listen, and judge, Lord, this my plaint.
Thou who didst mould the lion and lamb
Thou seest of what shape I am;
Not lovely as those creatures are,
But gawky, rude, familiar
In every field and market-place—
The jackiest jackass of my race.

Not much is it that is implored
By this Thy creature of my Lord—
I do not ask that Thou shouldst change
That which to His eyes was not strange
When on my grandad-grandad's hide
Thy Son t'ward Zion deigned to ride—
But Lord—came it of wisdom dark,
Or that Thy hand did cease to mark
That which it made (through weariness
Of fashioning beasts great and less)
Thou hast on me, Thy hapless jade,
Another heavy burden laid.

For upon Saints' days, when I stand
Holiday-making—twixt the sand
Of the bright foreshore and the steeple,

Whereunder crowd the stiff-starched people
To pay Thee homage, each great ear
Must a heavenly chorus hear:
First overhead ting-tang the bells,
Then in the aisle the organ swells,
Praising Thee, Lord, till deep and strong
The happy folk take up the song,
Till the gay birds outside, too, raise
A sweet, wild shrilling song of praise.

Mark then, what grief, Lord, must be mine
Who do not find Thee less divine,
For dared I also raise my voice,
That with the throng I might rejoice—
Ah! what a hell of sound I draw
Who can but sing '*Hee-Haw! Hee-Haw!*'
O grief! O shame! on every bush
The pert birds scold or bid me hush,
And—worst of all—my master hies
Out from the church with angry cries,
And, save I forthwith cease, his stick
Descends upon me fast and thick.

Lord—last—just this: at thy behest
All's done as seemeth to Thee best,
Old Balaam had an ass which spoke,
May not another of that folk?
Were it not but a little thing
To Thee to let a jackass sing
No less than proud sinner or poor saint?
That is all, Lord. Thus ends my plaint.

ROBERT NICHOLS.

THE MOON

Thy beauty haunts me heart and soul,
O thou fair Moon, so close and bright;
Thy beauty makes me like the child
That cries aloud to own thy light:
The little child that lifts each arm
To press thee to her bosom warm.

Though there are birds that sing this night
With thy white beams across their throats,
Let my deep silence speak for me
More than for them their sweetest notes:
Who worships thee till music fails
Is greater than thy nightingales.

W. H. Davies.

THE WILD DUCK

Twilight. Red in the West.
Dimness. A glow on the wood.
The teams plod home to rest.
The wild duck come to glean.
O souls not understood,
What a wild cry in the pool;
What things have the farm ducks seen
That they cry so—huddle and cry?

Only the soul that goes.
Eager. Eager. Flying.
Over the globe of the moon,
Over the wood that glows.
Wings linked. Necks a-strain,
A rush and a wild crying.

. . . .

A cry of the long pain
In the reeds of a steel lagoon,
In a land that no man knows.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

STAR TALK.

'ARE you awake, Gemelli,
This frosty night?'
'We'll be awake till réveillé,
Which is sunrise,' say the Gemelli,
'It's no good trying to go to sleep:
If there's wine to be got we'll drink it deep,
But rest is hopeless to-night,
But rest is hopeless to-night.'

'Are you cold too, poor Pleiads,
This frosty night?'
'Yes, and so are the Hyads:
See us cuddle and hug,' say the Pleiads,
'All six in a ring: it keeps us warm:
We huddle together like birds in a storm:
It's bitter weather to-night,
It's bitter weather to-night.'

'What do you hunt, Orion,
This starry night?'
'The Ram, the Bull, and the Lion,
And the Great Bear,' says Orion,
'With my starry quiver and beautiful belt,
I am trying to find a good thick pelt
To warm my shoulders to-night,
To warm my shoulders to-night.'

'Did you hear that, Great She-bear,
This frosty night?'
'Yes, he's talking of stripping me bare
Of my own big fur,' says the She-bear,
'I'm afraid of the man and his terrible arrow:
The thought of it chills my bones to the marrow,
And the frost so cruel to-night!
And the frost so cruel to-night!'

'How is your trade, Aquarius,
This frosty night?'
'Complaints is many and various,
And my feet are cold,' says Aquarius,
'There's Venus objects to Dolphin-scales,
And Mars to Crab-spawn found in my pails,
And the pump has frozen to-night,
And the pump has frozen to-night.'

ROBERT GRAVES.

HIS PRAYER TO BEN JONSON

When I a verse shall make,
Know I have pray'd thee,
For old religion's sake,
Saint Ben, to aid me.

Make the way smooth for me,
When I, thy Herrick,
Honouring thee, on my knee
Offer my lyric.

Candles I'll give to thee
And a new altar,
And thou, Saint Ben, shalt be
Writ in my Psalter.

Robert Herrick.

ROMANCE

When I was but thirteen or so
I went into a golden land,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Took me by the hand.

My father died, my brother too,
They passed like fleeting dreams,
I stood where Popocatapetl
In the sunlight gleams.

I dimly heard the master's voice
And boys far-off at play,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had stolen me away.

I walked in a great golden dream
To and fro from school—
Shining Popocatapetl
The dusty streets did rule.

I walked home with a gold dark boy,
And never a word I'd say,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had taken my speech away:

I gazed entranced upon his face
Fairer than any flower—
O shining Popocatapetl
It was thy magic hour:

The houses, people, traffic seemed
Thin fading dreams by day,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
They had stolen my soul away!

W. J. Turner

ARABIA

FAR are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

They haunt me—her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say—
'He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.'

WALTER DE LA MARE.

WITH A COPY OF HERRICK

Fresh with all airs of woodland brooks
  And scents of showers,
Take to your haunt of holy books
  This saint of flowers.

When meadows burn with budding May,
  And heaven is blue,
Before his shrine our prayers we say,—
  Saint Robin true.

Love crowned with thorns is on his staff,—
  Thorns of sweet-brier;
His benediction is a laugh,
  Birds are his choir.

His sacred robe of white and red
  Unction distils;
He hath a nimbus round his head
  Of daffodils.

Edmund Gosse.

ON MALVERN HILL

A WIND is brushing down the clover,
It sweeps the tossing branches bare,
Blowing the poising kestrel over
The crumbling ramparts of the Caer.

It whirls the scattered leaves before us
Along the dusty road to home,
Once it awakened into chorus
The heart-strings in the ranks of Rome.

There by the gusty coppice border
The shrilling trumpets broke the halt,
The Roman line, the Roman order,
Swayed forwards to the blind assault.

Spearman and charioteer and bowman
Charged and were scattered into spray,
Savage and taciturn the Roman
Hewed upwards in the Roman way.

There—in the twilight—where the cattle
Are lowing home across the fields,
The beaten warriors left the battle
Dead on the clansmen's wicker shields.

The leaves whirl in the wind's riot
Beneath the Beacon's jutting spur,
Quiet are clan and chief, and quiet
Centurion and signifer.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

TO HIS DEAR GOD

I'LL hope no more
For things that will not come:
And, if they do, they prove but cumbersome;
Wealth brings much woe:
And, since it fortunes so,
'Tis better to be poor,
Than so abound,
As to be drowned,
Or overwhelmed with store.

Pale care, avaunt!
I'll learn to be content
With that small stock Thy Bounty gave or lent.
What may conduce
To my most healthful use,
Almighty God, me grant;
But that, or this,
That hurtful is,
Deny thy suppliant.

ROBERT HERRICK.

'Come live with me.'

BY THE SEA

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;

The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouch'd by solemn thought
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE

COME live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love.

Thy silver dishes for thy meat
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

TO HIS LOVE

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights;

Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have exprest
Ev'n such a beauty as you master now.

So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing:

For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

William Shakespeare.

MY LADY GREENSLEEVES

Alas! my love, you do me wrong
To cast me off discourtcously;
And I have lovèd you so long,
Delighting in your company.
Greensleeves was all my joy!
Greensleeves was my delight!
Greensleeves was my heart of gold!
And who but my Lady Greensleeves!

I bought thee petticoats of the best,
The cloth so fine as fine as might be;
I gave thee jewels for thy chest,
And all this cost I spent on thee.
Greensleeves was all my joy!
Greensleeves was my delight!
Greensleeves was my heart of gold!
And who but my Lady Greensleeves!

Thy smock of silk, both fair and white,
With gold embroidered gorgeously;
Thy petticoat of sendal right:
And these I bought thee gladly.
Greensleeves was all my joy!
Greensleeves was my delight!
Greensleeves was my heart of gold!
And who but my Lady Greensleeves!

Greensleeves now farewell! adieu!
God I pray to prosper thee!
For I am still thy lover true:
Come once again and love me!
Greensleeves was all my joy!
Greensleeves was all my delight!
Greensleeves was my heart of gold!
And who but my Lady Greensleeves!

ANONYMOUS.

THE BANKS O' DOON

Ye flowery banks o' bonie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause Luve was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wist na o' my fate.

Aft hae I roved by bonie Doon
To see the woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Frae aff its thorny tree;
And my fause luver staw the rose,
But left the thorn wi' me.

Robert Burns.

SONG

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauties orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more, whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For, in pure love, heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more, whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more, where those stars light,
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more, if east or west,
The phœnix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

THOMAS CAREW.

A RED, RED ROSE

O MY Luve's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
O I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

ROBERT BURNS.

THE GLORIES OF OUR BLOOD AND STATE

THE glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill:
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
They tame but one another still:

Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds:
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

JAMES SHIRLEY.

DIRGE FROM 'CYMBELINE'

FEAR no more the heat o' the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash
  Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
  Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

HERACLITUS

THEY told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept, as I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of gray ashes, long long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

WILLIAM CORY.

SONNET

WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought
  I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
  And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste;

Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since-cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before:

—But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

EASTER NIGHT

ALL night had shout of men and cry
Of woeful women filled His way;
Until that noon of sombre sky
On Friday, clamour and display
Smote Him; no solitude had He,
No silence, since Gethsemane.

Public was Death; but Power, but Might,
But Life again, but Victory,
Were hushed within the dead of night,
The shutter'd dark, the secrecy.
And all alone, alone, alone
He rose again behind the stone.

ALICE MEYNELL.

THE SHIP

THERE was no song nor shout of joy
  Nor beam of moon or sun,
When she came back from the voyage
  Long ago begun;
But twilight on the waters
  Was quiet and gray,
And she glided steady, steady and pensive,
  Over the open bay.

Her sails were brown and ragged,
  And her crew hollow-eyed,
But their silent lips spoke content
  And their shoulders pride;
Though she had no captives on her deck,
  And in her hold
There were no heaps of corn or timber
  Or silks or gold.

J. C. SQUIRE.

REAL PROPERTY

Tell me about that harvest field.
—Oh! Fifty acres of living bread.
The colour has painted itself in my heart.
The form is patterned in my head.

So now I take it everywhere;
See it whenever I look round;
Hear it growing through every sound,

Know exactly the sound it makes—
Remembering, as one must all day,
Under the pavement the live earth aches.

Trees are at the farther end,
Limes all full of the drowsy bee:
So there must be a harvest field
Whenever one thinks of a linden-tree.

A hedge is round it, very tall,
Hazy and cool and breathing sweet.
Round paradise is such a wall,
And all the day, in such a way,
In paradise the wild birds call.

You only need to close your eyes
And pass into your secret mind,
And you'll be into paradise:
I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden-trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown:
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own:
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day. . . .

Sometimes when I have found a friend
I give a blade of corn away.

HAROLD MONRO.

TO MEADOWS

Ye have been fresh and green,
  Ye have been filled with flowers;
And ye the walks have been
  Where maids have spent their hours.

Ye have beheld how they
  With wicker arks did come
To kiss and bear away
  The richer cowslips home.

You've heard them sweetly sing,
  And seen them in a round,
Each virgin, like a Spring,
  With honeysuckles crowned.

But now we see none here
  Whose silvery feet did tread,
And with dishevelled hair
  Adorned this smoother mead.

Like unthrifts, having spent
  Your stock, and needy grown,
You're left here to lament
  Your poor estates alone.

Robert Herrick.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

(1)

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, oh, hear!

(2)

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: oh, hear!

(3)

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

(4)

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed
Scarce seemed a vision, I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

(5)

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.'

ODE TO AUTUMN

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease;
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them,—thou hast thy music too,
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
  Among the river sallows, borne aloft
    Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
  Hedge-crickets sing, and now with treble soft
  The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
    And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

JOHN KEATS.

A THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR HIS HOUSE

LORD, Thou hast given me a cell
    Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
    Is weatherproof;
Under the spars of which I lie
    Both soft and dry.
Where Thou, my chamber for to ward,
    Hast set a guard
Of harmless thoughts, to watch and keep
    Me while I sleep.
Low is my porch, as is my fate,
    Both void of state;
And yet the threshold of my door
    Is worn by the poor,
Who hither come, and freely get
    Good words or meat.
Like as my parlour, so my hall,
    And kitchen small;
A little buttery, and therein
    A little bin,

Which keeps my little loaf of bread
Unchipt, unflead.
Some brittle sticks of thorn or brier
Make me a fire,
Close by whose living coal I sit,
And glow like it.
Lord, I confess, too, when I dine
The pulse is Thine,
And all those other bits that be
There placed by Thee.
The worts, the purslain, and the mess
Of water-cress,
Which of Thy kindness Thou hast sent:
And my content
Makes those, and my beloved beet,
To be more sweet.
'Tis Thou that crown'st my glittering hearth
With guiltless mirth;
And giv'st me wassail bowls to drink,
Spiced to the brink.
Lord, 'tis Thy plenty-dropping hand
That sows my land:
All this, and better, dost Thou send
Me for this end:
That I should render for my part
A thankful heart,
Which, fired with incense, I resign
As wholly Thine:
But the acceptance—that must be,
O Lord, by Thee.

ROBERT HERRICK.

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness, and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply :
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn;

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne—
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A Youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown;
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heaven, 'twas all he wish'd, a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

THOMAS GRAY.

AUTUMN

I LOVE the fitful gust that shakes
The casement all the day,
And from the glossy elm-tree takes
The faded leaves away,
Twirling them by the window pane
With thousand others down the lane.

I love to see the shaking twig
Dance till the shut of eve,
The sparrow on the cottage rig,
Whose chirp would make believe
That Spring was just now flirting by
In Summer's lap with flowers to lie.

I love to see the cottage smoke
Curl upwards through the trees,
The pigeons nestled round the cote
On November days like these;
The cock upon the dunghill crowing,
The mill sails on the heath a-going.

The feather from the raven's breast
Falls on the stubble lea,
The acorns near the old crow's nest
Drop pattering down the tree;
The grunting pigs, that wait for all,
Scramble and hurry where they fall.

JOHN CLARE.

THE GARDEN

How vainly men themselves amaze,
To win the palm, the oak, or bays;
And their incessant labours see
Crowned from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow-vergèd shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all the flowers and trees do close,
To weave the garlands of repose!

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men.
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow;
Society is all but rude
To this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen
So amorous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name:
Little, alas! they know or heed,
How far these beauties hers exceed!
Fair trees! wheres'e'er your bark I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have seen our passion's heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
Still in a tree did end their race;

'Fair Quiet, have I found thee here?'

Apollo hunted Daphne so,
Only that she might laurel grow;
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wondrous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine, and curious peach,
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide:
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and combs its silver wings,
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk'd without a mate:
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one,
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skilful gardener drew
Of flowers, and herbs, this dial new;
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run,
And, as it works, the industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we!
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers?

ANDREW MARVELL.

YATTENDON

Among the woods and tillage
  That fringe the topmost downs,
All lonely lies the village,
  Far off from seas and towns.
Yet when her own folk slumbered
  I heard within her street
Murmur of men unnumbered
  And march of myriad feet.

For all she lies so lonely,
  Far off from towns and seas,
The village holds not only
  The roofs beneath her trees:
While Life is sweet and tragic
  And Death is veiled and dumb,
Hither, by singer's magic,
  The pilgrim world must come.

Henry Newbolt.

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

'There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.'—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill!
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head!
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,

While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd, will I be!
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he knew
Met him, and of his way of life inquir'd.
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains;

And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill!'

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—
But rumours hung about the country-side
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of gray,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly;—
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer, on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;

And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream!

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering
Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,

Have known thee watching, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slowly away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley-wood,
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of gray,
Above the forest-ground call'd Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all!
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face toward Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climb'd the hill
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy tribe.
And thou from earth art gone

Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid!
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our well-worn life, and are—what we have been!

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire!
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead—
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not!

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled,
brings.
O life unlike to ours!

Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven: and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah, do not we, wanderer, await it too?

Yes! we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair;
But none has hope like thine!

Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its head o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest!
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,

Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves;
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

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